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THE  
FEUDS  
OF  
**LUNA & PEROLLO ;**

OR, THE  
FORTUNES  
OF THE

*HOUSE OF PANDOLFINA.*

AN HISTORIC ROMANCE, OF THE SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY

~~~~~  
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

Who set this ancient quarrel new abreach?  
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

SHAKESPEARE.

~~~~~  
VOL. IV.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

A. K. NEWMAN AND Co. LEADENHALL-STREET.

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THE  
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OF  
LUNA AND PEROLLO.

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CHAPTER I.

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And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubins hors'd  
Upon the silent coursers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. *Macbeth.*

WITH the first gleams of the morning the portal of the castle was thrown open, and the banners of Luna and Peralta borne out, followed by the whole of the party who had remained with don Sigismund. About an hundred men had been left with Pugiades, and others had been stationed

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to protect the barricado, and to keep possession of the posts they had seized on during the night. Don Sigismund himself, in complete armour, followed his banner, and was surrounded by a numerous band of his principal friends, among whom were Adriano, Della Bardia, Ferrante Luchese, Nicola lo Vasco, Cesare Imbiagnia, Geronimo and Calogero Calandrino, Erasmo Loria, and many others of the first rank in Sciacca. The drums and trumpets sounded as the chief appeared, and a shout arose from the multitude, which echoed through the silent and deserted streets.

With wild and discordant cries, clattering their arms, and sounding their warlike instruments, the whole body proceeded towards the residence of Statella, against whom the rancour of the insurgents was excited, with scarcely less bitterness than against don Giacomo Perollo, the ancient object of their most inveterate hatred and detestation.

Startled from their slumbers by the sud-



den and unexpected tumult, many of the citizens escaped from their houses in horror and dismay ; others, in immoveable terror, awaited the approach of their expected foes without the power of exertion, either for escape or for defence ; but it was only against Pandolfina and Statella that the rage of Luna and his partisans was directed. The latter was destined to be the first object of attack, as likely to fall the easiest victim to their frenzy, his residence being destitute of defence, and himself surrounded by few followers in comparison with the numerous retainers of the family of Perollo.

Towards his abode then they proceeded with threats of vengeance for the death of Erasta, and the proceedings which had been instituted against their other associates. A storm of musquetry passed through the windows, and a flight of arrows which followed it announced to the inmates of the palazzo the fate which awaited them. Ladders were immediately ap-

plied to the walls, and an infinite number of the merciless assailants poured in at every aperture.

Some slight resistance was offered by Statella and his military companions; their valour was however vain against the overpowering strength of their foes, and they retired to a tower which formed part of the building; nor was even this retreat effected without the fall of one of the bravest of the devoted band. Antonio Margieri had thrown himself before the doorway through which Statella had retired, and alone and unsupported for some minutes, resisted the united force of the assailants.

Wearied out and oppressed by numbers, his strength was beginning to fail; his opponents gave a shout of triumph, and he retreated beneath the archway. Here he was in less danger of being surrounded, and in some degree relieved from the numbers which opposed him. But in vain had he laid three of his adversaries dead at his feet, and desperately wounded several

others; his own blood streamed profusely, and he felt his weakness rapidly increasing.

"This is my victim!" exclaimed a voice from the crowd; and Accursi forcibly made his way to the portal, beneath which the combat was continued.

Margieri recognized the murderer of his brother, and the ruffian who had once before sought his life. He rallied his spirits for a while, and returned the first blows of Della Bardia, with a strength renovated by the hope of avenging the fall of Pietro and of himself; he saw again the blood of his enemy follow the stroke of his weapon, but was now too much exhausted to keep up the combat. He retreated to a turn of the passage—his foes shouted again, and rushed upon him. He now feebly opposed his battered shield, which afforded little resistance to the might of Della Bardia, when a shrill scream of a female voice caused him to turn his head for an instant, and the sword of his antagonist was buried deep in his side. He staggered and fell at Della Bardia's feet, who trampled him

down, shouting—"Viva Luna e Peralta!" and was rushing forward when arrested by the female form from whence the cry proceeded.

A lady, hastily attired, having just risen from her bed, stood looking wildly around her—"Murderer!" she exclaimed, "you have slain my husband!"

The ruthless monster levelled a blow at her defenceless form, and she fell beside the slaughtered Antonio.

The crowd for an instant halted, as if appalled at the crime; but the rushing on of those behind impelled them forwards, and the bodies of Margieri and his hapless wife were trodden in the dust by the swarming multitude. The palazzo was soon filled in every part except the tower, to which Statella and some of his friends had retreated. The counsellors who had attended the general from Messina, the lawyers, alguazils, and domestics, were butchered in every apartment, and either hurled half dead from the windows into the street below, or trampled under the feet

of the murderers, like the gallant Margieri.

Every thing which could invite the hand of rapine and plunder soon disappeared. The informations which had been taken by Statella in his legal capacity were heaped together in the court, and soon reduced to ashes, whilst the greater part of the insurgents, with their principal leaders, were directing their attention to the retreat in which the first object of their vengeance had secured himself.

Most of the inhabitants of the palazzo, at the time of the attack, had been buried in sleep, and awakened by the tumult without; few of them had time to arm themselves, Margieri and two or three of his companions being the only persons who had not retired to rest.

Armed only with his sword, Statella had cut his way through the party who had first succeeded in entering, and was followed by such of his officers and men as had joined him in the moment of alarm. From one of the windows of the tower he had demanded the aid of all the loyal citi-

zens of Sciacca to defend his person, as the representative of their sovereign. He was answered only by a volley of musquetry and a flight of arrows, which struck down one of his companions beside him. The screams and cries of the murdered victims, which rose from every part of the palazzo, mingled with the shouts of the insurgents, announced to those who had retired the work of slaughter which was performing, and the fate which awaited themselves.

They resolved, at all events, to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Three or four of the men sent by Perollo, with one of the officers of Statella, who was tolerably accoutred for service, stationed themselves at the lower door of the tower, and for a considerable time resisted the united force of their enemies. One by one they fell beneath the musket balls of their assailants, and were cut in pieces on the spot where they fell. Every step of the ascent was manfully contested by the party within, and as perseveringly assaulted by the adherents of Luna. The Greek count

Georgio fought beside his friend Accursi, and with Luchese and Calogero Calandrino, was one of the principal leaders of the attack upon the tower, the interior of which they gained after a long and arduous conflict, and burst into the room in which was the object of their search, with the small remnant of his ill-fated friends.

As they rushed in, the sword of Statella cleft the helmet of one of the foremost, a kinsman of Della Bardia, of the race of D'Amato; he fell a lifeless corpse at the feet of the general, whose sword was shivered with the blow, and count Georgio, springing forward, laid Statella himself beside the victim of his short-lived triumph, having buried his sword deep in the bosom of the gallant and unarmed Catanese. He fell, and expired without a groan.

The swords of the other assassins soon completed their work of slaughter, and of all the inhabitants of the palazzo who were two hours before fearlessly sleeping, not one survived this exterminating massacre.

The bodies of the dead were stripped by the inferior vassals, and cast with ignominy from the tower.

Having searched the building to ascertain that no living soul had escaped their fury, the desperate band left the bloody scene, and advanced with tumultuous shouts of victory and vengeance towards the Casa di Perollo, the inhabitants of which soon guessed that their rejoicing was caused by the destruction of the unhappy Statella and his companions.

Their first act of hostility was to batter down one of the gates leading to the castle, called la Porta del Catogno; from thence they proceeded to another gate, which was attached to the church of St. Pietro belonging to the castle, and enclosed the whole south side of it. Count Luna then divided his troops into two bodies. Accursi, D'Amato, and Ferrante Luchese, were left with a large detachment to prosecute the enterprise against this gate of San Pietro, and exerted themselves with useless bravery, every assault being re-



pulsed with considerable loss to the partisans of Luna, of whom numbers fell, and more were wounded.

With the remainder of his force don Sigismund advanced against the principal entrance; but on the tower which surmounted it was stationed don Paolo Perollo, who, by the skilful management of the artillery, and the support of a few men armed with arquebusses, made the assailants pay dear for their temerity.

During these assaults on the north and western sides of the castle, Pugiades remained in the valley beneath the eastern wall. This chieftain had joined himself to the party of don Sigismund in a sudden fit of dislike to Pandolfina, with whom he was nearly connected by the marriage of his sister with don Federico Perollo, a deceased brother of don Giacomo, and upon whose death some dispute had arisen respecting the restitution of the dowry which Lucretia Pugiades had carried with her; the cause, however, for the quarrel was

but trifling, till it was blown into a flame by the artifices of Adriano.

Don Michele would gladly perhaps have seen the influence of Pandolfina reduced, and his pride humbled ; but when he saw the extremity to which the violence of the party he had joined was likely to transport them, he would, had he not considered it too late, have retired with his auxiliaries from all further connexion with count Luna. The idea that his retreat during the heat of the contest might look like cowardice or a violation of his promises restrained him ; but he remained an inactive spectator, and prevented the troops under his command from offering any hostilities to Perollo, who, knowing the banner of Pugiades, and perceiving his pacific intentions, permitted no sign of annoyance to be shewn towards them, though some of his artillery commanded the position which don Michele and his followers occupied, and the conduct of the two parties on this side appeared more like that of allies than of enemies.

After some hours, the count ordered a retreat, and leaving guards strongly posted round such parts of the building as they could approach, he went up the street of Sta. Caterina to the principal church, which had been selected for the rendezvous of his forces, the Castel di Luna not being large enough to afford quarters to such a number of men.

After a short repast, they again resumed their arms, and collecting a number of pioneers, and of the lower class of citizens, they loaded them with ladders, beams, ropes, and every machine by which they might beat down the walls. They caused others to carry fire and combustibles for the destruction of the gates; and again, with the sounds of martial music, proceeded through the streets with count Luna at their head.

Three vigorous attacks were made upon various parts of the building; but the gallant defenders drove them back, with loss to their enemies alone. The scaling-ladders were applied, and in one direction a fol-

lower of count Georgio succeeded in mounting the battlements, from whence he was speedily hurled by the powerful arm of don Giacomo, whilst those who were following met their fate from the archers above them. The attempt to fire the gates was equally fruitless; the besieged poured down such abundance of water, that the combustibles were carried away by the torrent, which held on its course till it reached the rocky cliff which overhung the ocean. The besiegers lost many men, and had a considerably-larger number severely wounded, whilst in the party of Perollo the deaths had been very few, and not many injured.

There appeared but little danger of the final event of the contest, and the spirits of don Giacomo seemed to rise with the approach of peril. On the day previous to the attack, he had been depressed and dejected; but no sooner had the first alarm summoned him to the ramparts, than all the energies of his soul seemed to be called forth; his orders were issued with cool-

ness and composure, and he contemplated the struggle with apparent satisfaction, and without any doubt as to its successful termination. His manners were cheerful, and even gay, and the reports he gave to the ladies of the impotent attacks of their enemies, could not fail to quiet the alarms even of the countess Sambuca, who chattered with her usual volubility, which was only occasionally interrupted by the thunders of the castle artillery, or the entrance of her husband.

The spirit of Pandolfina pervaded every part of the fortress; wherever the assailants appeared to threaten, he was seen animating his men to action; every point which seemed weaker than another, was defended with skill, and escaped not his instant observation.

At length the evening closed in, and the trumpets of count Luna sounded a retreat. He retired, little satisfied with the event of the struggles, though earlier in the day he had fully expected that his overpowering force would have given him

a speedy victory, and that ere night his enemy would have been a prisoner in his hands; but when he reflected upon the resolution and skill which had been shewn by Perollo in the defence, he could not but acknowledge that his prospect of triumph seemed doubtful, and with far other feelings he retired from the scene of action, than those with which he had first advanced to the attack.

On the retreat of his enemies, the baron Pandolfina instantly began to repair the mischief they had done. Stones, mattresses, and sacks of wool, were placed in various parts of the walls, to arrest the shot and arrows of the besiegers, and all the reservoirs filled with water, to resist any other attempt to fire the building; whilst to shew that all were vigilant within, and to prevent any attack under cover of the darkness, watch-fires were kindled in the towers and turrets of the castle, which threw far and wide a terrific glare over the city and its environs, and enabled those upon the walls to take aim at any of the

centinels posted by their enemy, who might advance within the range of their guns, and who on their parts were not inactive; but at intervals during the night was heard the pealing of their muskets and the whistling of their arrows.

Before he retired for the night, Perollo addressed his men with thanks for their brave exertions during the day; promises of noble rewards, and every argument most likely to encourage them in maintaining a gallant defence till the arrival of succours, for the sake of themselves, their wives and children. His kind and affectionate manner gave additional weight to his words, and all his auditors united in protesting their determination to fall beneath the ruins of the castle, rather than yield it to their sanguinary foes, or submit to the slightest degradation.

During the trying scene of the day, the baroness Pandolfina had shewn few symptoms of alarm; the paleness of her cheek had passed unnoticed by most of the party; don Giacomo and Marguerita only observ-

ed it attentively. The former, by an air of gaiety, had endeavoured to dissipate her anxiety, and to inspire her with the cheerfulness he felt himself; the latter had mustered all her resolution to banish her past sorrows and quiet her present fears, feeling justly that it was only by exerting herself in such a season as this that she could prove, beyond a doubt, the sincere and fervent gratitude she felt towards her kind friends; and by her attentions, and appearing herself to feel no apprehensions, she succeeded in supporting the spirits of her benefactress. It was no easy task to suppress her own feelings; but the affectionate gratitude of the signora Landolini was more than equal to it, though the perverse loquacity of the countess Sambuca frequently made the trial more severe by recurring to past events, which Marguerita could not remember without the deepest affliction.

When the castle artillery had thundered on the assailants, and her first alarms had subsided, she exclaimed—"Oh, dearest



Marguerita ! for mercy's sake tell us ! Is it like the dreadful scene on board the corsair, when you were first carried off ?”

“ I had no gallant defenders—no one on whom to rely but Heaven,” she replied.

“ You certainly had all the terror to yourself,” continued the countess, “ which, I suppose, made the affair so particularly interesting, for I have heard my dear departed friend,” here she gave a deep sigh, “ signor Gaetano, express his admiration of your fortitude and resignation, and I have seen him listen with attention to the detail of the whole affair, which he must have heard several times, though, I assure you, I could scarcely get from him one attempt at condolence, when I related the whole of my dreadful misfortune at the time the letiga was overturned, and I bruised my arm about five years back ; besides which, one morning, during mass, at San Pietro, I told him the whole history of the frightful rat I saw at Sambuca, when I first went there after my marriage, and the count was so inhuman as to insist

upon my remaining. Do you know, my dear creature, he positively refused to leave the castle, though I assured him I should inevitably expire, and really had several fits upon the occasion. Well, my dear friend, I related the whole of this shocking incident in the church, and when I had done, he made some stupid remark about the music. Could any thing be so afflicting? I hope now, when we have half of us been butchered, that I shall have something to relate, which may be as entertaining as your story of the pirates."

To escape from her persecutor, Marguerita retired for a while to the chamber of the baroness Solanto, who was much disturbed and terrified by the discharge of the artillery, and the evident confusion which it was impossible to conceal from her entirely.

Don Giacomo, fearful of the effect it might have upon her, repaired to her as soon as he could, and made light of the disturbance—"Dissatisfied with the strict proceedings instituted against them for

their violent conduct, count Luna and his partisans," he said, "are endeavouring to terrify the civil authorities into submission to his will, and is disposed to try his skill against our walls. It is a pity too that his misguided folly should involve him in the ruin which is sure to overtake his rebellion. I have been obliged to order my men to keep off his turbulent associates by the noise of my artillery, which I regret from the disturbance it may occasion to your excellenza."

"Your kindness, signor," replied the invalid, "has indeed been unremitting; to me it will soon cease to be necessary; but for my poor Costanza I trust it will still be exerted, either till the restoration of her lost father, or till her family can receive her. The eternal gratitude of all our connexions cannot repay the debt we owe to you, for your constant and active friendship to us all. My sufferings in this world, I feel, must soon cease, and were it not for the distressing condition in which I leave my beloved child, I could

hail the approach of death with satisfaction."

"My dear mother, talk not thus," said Costanza; "you are low and terrified, but indeed not so much worse as you fear."

"My child, do not deceive yourself; let me take this, perhaps last, opportunity of speaking to my noble friend."

"Dear donna Costanza," said the baron, "I trust her excellenza is much better than she thinks herself; but do not let us agitate her by any opposition; and be assured, madam," he said, addressing the baroness, "that till the restoration of the baron, which I hope will be very soon, his daughter shall be as much my care as if she were my own; and if there is any thing in my power, now or hereafter, which will contribute to your comfort, I beseech you to command me: but these storms will soon blow over, and the offenders punished. We shall all live to tell them to our children's children, as tales of other times; and for any services I am able to render, some of my family may per-

haps be desirous to tax your gratitude at a very high price."

"I can think of none which it would not be happiness to pay," said the baroness, "and your confidence in the event of this struggle with our ruthless persecutor gives me great comfort for you and those I leave behind me. I know you will exert every effort to restore my husband to liberty, if he is still in this world, and your assurances of care of my poor child give me the only consolation I am now capable of feeling."

The baron then returned to the baroness and her companions, and shortly after don Paolo entered. The baroness did not trust herself to speak; but she looked at him with intense anxiety, and he answered to her looks—"All has gone on through the day, even as your *eccellenza* could wish."

"Do you tell me so?" she said, with a faint smile. "I feared Pandolfina had assumed cheerfulness to calm our fears."

"Don Giacomo could not have express-

ed more confidence than is felt by every individual within the walls. Our loss to-day has been almost nothing—the enemy's very great, and every thing is in such perfect order for to-morrow, that all but the centinels may rest as quietly as if count Luna and his party were not in existence."

"After toiling all day," said Pandolfina to the baroness, "think what a refreshment and comfort it must be to me and Paolo also to find you serene and tranquil, and able to attend to our repose and accommodation, instead of our having to quiet fears, which, as they are as often as not directed to subjects in which no rational causes of alarm exist, reason has very little chance of alleviating."

"I am sure," said the countess Sambuca, "the wretches have broken all the windows in the state apartments, for I heard the most dreadful riot in that direction, and it would be so shocking to have the new hangings spoiled."

"It would indeed," said the baron, smiling; "but your excellenza's known taste

and industry would give me hopes of some from your hands, and those of our other fair cousins, which would far outvalue those destroyed."

"Santa Maria!" said the countess, "what a horrible idea! It is well the count is not here: if such a fancy once got possession of him, he would insist on my working tapestry, or doing some shocking useful thing for every room at Sambuca."

"Here is the count himself coming, I think," said don Paolo.

"Is he indeed? Then I am sure I must go and visit the dear interesting baroness Solanto, and the sweet humble-minded Costanza. I have not been near them all day."

"No, for Heaven's sake, don't!" said Marguerita, running to prevent her; "your excellenza had better defer your visit till to-morrow morning."

"My dear creature, by to-morrow we may all be killed, and then, you know, I can never go at all."

“Do not be under any alarm,” said the count, who just entered, “for our foes must be too much in want of rest to disturb us to-night, and to-morrow we will find them too good employment to give them time to annoy you.”

Before her husband had ceased speaking, the countess had retired to her legend and her corner, with one of Perollo's children, whom she detained an unwilling auditor of a miserable detail of what might happen from those terrible people the Lunas, until the child began to weep audibly from terror, and was rescued from the general tormentor.



CHAPTER II.  
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De mon fiel abreuvés à mes fureurs en proie  
Combattre avec audace, et mourir avec joie.

*Henriade.*

At the dawn of morning, Ferrante Luchese was sent with a detachment of the forces to continue the attack upon the side of St. Pietro, which church was entirely destroyed during the conflict. With another party don Pietro Gilberto, a Palermitan cavalier, attached to count Luna, took his way through the Porta di Santa Caterina, and sounding their drums and trumpets, shouting "Viva Luna and Peralta!" they mounted the roof of a palazzo which faced the great gateway. From this post they commenced a discharge of guns and cross-bows against don Paolo,

who was stationed on the tower. Being now more nearly on a level with the besieged, their shot took more effect, and many of the companions of don Paolo were wounded, but he himself escaped, though wherever the conflict was the hottest, there was seen the gleaming of his white armour and the waving of his plume; nor did the assailants purchase this advantage without feeling the vengeance of the gallant defenders; torrents of blood poured from the roof of the palazzo, and many of Gilberto's men fell lifeless from the summit of the building; but the enthusiasm of both parties seemed to increase with the increasing danger.

Amongst those who distinguished themselves in this conflict was don Antonio di Noto, a cavalier justly celebrated for his military talents and bravery; he had mounted amongst those who had taken possession of the palazzo, and had done considerable damage to the adherents of Perollo. The count Sambuca had been the chief victim of his unerring aim, and was borne

from the scene of action senseless and bleeding.

The countess, when informed of the accident, rent the air with screams, notwithstanding she was assured that her husband's wound, though severe, did not appear to be dangerous.

"Let us render him all the service we can," said the baroness Pandolfina. "Come, my dear madam, you must be impatient to be with him."

"Jesu Maria, baroness!" again screamed the countess, "I cannot endure the sight of blood. Oh! my dear, dear Sambuca! pray let him have a priest and a doctor," and again her grief was vented in cries and lamentations.

The baroness, seeing that nothing like rational assistance was to be obtained from the lady, left the room to render all the aid in her power to the wounded man.

Don Paolo saw the fall of the count, and resolving to avenge him, singled out one of his opponents who appeared to be of consequence; he levelled his harque-

the morning; machines were brought to endeavour to batter down the walls, but with little or no success, except where Accursi had succeeded in making a breach in the house of Luchese; here, however, don Giacomo had brought two pieces of artillery to bear upon the assailants, and made a tremendous slaughter of the partisans of Luna.

Amidst the combatants, the gigantic figure of Accursi was eminently conspicuous; his dark plumes waved high over the heads of the surrounding multitude, and he appeared rejoicing in the scene of blood and desolation. By his side was Francisco Sacchetta, captain of the Lances, who had joined don Sigismund from Salemi, and who distinguished himself during the day by his intrepid courage: a shaft from a cross-bow at length pierced his eye, and at the same time a shot carried off his right arm. He fell weltering in his blood; a cry of vengeance burst from his associates, and Della Bardia, ex-

horting them to avenge the fall of Sacchetta, planted a ladder against the breach, and rushed through it sword in hand.

An exclamation from the besieged in the tower above caught the watchful attention of Pandolfina—"Follow me," he cried, to those nearest his person, and with the swiftness of lightning flew to the passage which led into the house of Luchese. The figure of Accursi darkened the entrance; the harquebus of Pandolfina was levelled in an instant, and Della Bardia lay prostrate at the threshold.

"Forward!" cried Perollo to his followers, as he rushed towards the body.

Count Giorgio raised the fallen chieftain with inconceivable quickness, and aided by his men, conveyed him down the ladder, whilst a violent contest took place at the portal. Perollo was at length victorious; the partisans of Luna fled before him, and retreating with his friends again into his castle, the passage was

ately closed against all future danger, by battering down part of the mansion from above.

The body of Accursi was conveyed into the air, and his helmet taken off. The ball had lodged in his head; but he still lived, though speechless, and after a few moments appeared to revive. His valour had excited in his followers the highest respect, and they now crowded round him bewailing his misfortune; he was sensible of their conduct, and seemed perfectly aware of his own situation, intimating by signs a wish to be removed from the scene, and waving his hand to his soldiers, pointed to the towers of the castle, as if exciting them to revenge his death by the destruction of Perollo. He was then carried to the house of his kinsman Imbiagnia, as being nearest to the spot, and information of the unfortunate event dispatched to don Sigismund.

The character of Della Bardia was not such as to have conciliated the affection of his family; but their knowledge of his

firmness and resolution, and their esteem for his bravery, made them deeply lament the fatal catastrophe, and Luna, in particular, well knew the worth of his long-tried services and attachment, which, from whatever cause it proceeded, made him, under present circumstances, one of the greatest losses he could have sustained. He commanded that every care should be taken of his wounded friend, and the countess Caltabellotta informed of the accident.

Pietro Gilberto and his party, from the roof of the palazzo, still continued to maintain their conflict with those upon the tower, with some loss on both sides, but chiefly on the part of the besiegers. Despairing of driving his enemies from their station, and confiding in the bravery of his followers, don Pietro at length descended from his post, and with more than an hundred men advanced furiously to the castle gate, to endeavour once more to fire it. This movement was observed by don Paolo, and instantly provided against: he

commanded a large mortar to be filled with chains, nails, stones, and whatever means of offence was at hand, and discharged it at the advancing column, who were swept down in multitudes, and nearly the whole party killed or wounded by the blow.

The adherents of Luna stood aghast at this new method of destruction. Don Paolo perceived their consternation, and his artillery was opened upon them with fresh fury. The space before the castle was covered with the slaughtered followers of Gilberto, the remnant of whom began to give way, and fled in all directions; the friends of Perollo shouted in triumph; the gates were thrown open, and don Paolo, at the head of only twelve men, rushed out upon their routed foes.

Don Pietro had halted, transfixed with wonder and dismay, and was nearly abandoned by his men, when a bolt from the cross-bow of Perollo pierced his side. He turned and joined his flying host. At the entrance of the street of Santa Caterina, he met don Sigismund and Adriano, and



staggering towards the count, fell at his feet, and instantly expired.

The alarm spread by the fugitives, and the fall of Gilberto, reached the ears of Ferrante Luchese, who hastened with a considerable reinforcement to their aid, upon which don Paolo retired, and safely reconducted his brave companions within the walls. All the exhortations of Ferrante, and the force of his example, could not, after this, bring his people to a fresh assault; they had received too severe a lesson from the hands of don Paolo to venture again within reach of his fire, or to expose themselves to the danger of another sally; and gladly did the partisans of Luna hear the signal for retreat, which sounded as sunset closed the bloody and disastrous day which had seen the fall of their boldest leaders, and the flower of their troops, without giving them any advantage to boast against their impregnable enemy.

Having placed guards for the night, count Luna retired to his castle, much

dispirited at the events which had deprived him of his brave friends Della Bardia and Gilberto, and at the fruitless sacrifice of so many other faithful and devoted adherents: during the night the chief commanders assembled to deliberate on the unpromising state of their affairs.

Pugiades and Bartolomeo Tagliavia were almost the only advocates for peace; the former urged that they had now given their enemy a lesson of their courage and resolution in redressing their wrongs, and though they had not effected an entrance into the castle, still they had cut off many of their adversaries; and that rather than prosecute the affair, there could be no doubt but that don Giacomo would make some sacrifice and submission, of no less value than the destruction of a greater portion of his vassals; his men would soon be recruited, but his pride, once brought down to submit, could not easily rise to the height to which it had hitherto soared.

Don Michele pointed out the sacrifice

at which they had maintained the contest, and the little chance they had of being more successful on the morrow—"The walls of the castle," he said, "were uninjured; the spirits of the besieged undaunted, whilst their own troops were dispirited and disheartened. If with eight hundred men," he continued, "we have failed in storming their fortress, can we hope to be more fortunate with our forces weakened and reduced? Their friends are likely to increase; succours will arrive from every quarter, and from what resources can we multiply our numbers? Every man we can command has been brought into action, and if we waste our forces by a continuation of these useless attacks, what prospect can we have of compelling our enemies to terms hereafter, upon which our eventual safety must depend? My advice is, that terms be offered to Perollo—a due submission extorted from him, and some secure guarantee required against a renewal of the oppression to which we have been subject."

Bartolomeo Tagliavia agreed as to the policy of treating with Perollo—"The populace," he said, "were vehemently attached to his party, and had only been kept from rising tumultuously in his defence by their terror of the armed adherents of the count; the bad success of the last two days would encourage them to make a movement in favour of don Giacomo, and count Luna would be surrounded on all sides, even before the distant friends of Perollo could arrive. Our own troops," he added, "are much disheartened, and the catastrophe of Gilberto and his detachment has struck them with such a panic, that they could not again be rallied. During the night their ardour will continue to abate; they will learn the various misfortunes which occurred in other points of attack, and by to-morrow we shall find them more anxious to seek protection within the walls of Luna Castle, than to encounter the valour of don Paolo, and the terrors of his irresistible artillery."

Adriano thought it would be easy to

lure don Giacomo from his walls by proposing an amnesty, and that his insolence would undoubtedly give occasion to their followers to avenge it; their impetuosity could not be restrained; and if Perollo thus fell a victim to his own imprudence, he only would be to blame. The chiefs of the party would avoid the danger they might incur by continuing their acts of violence, and might, as they found most politic, punish or connive at the murder which the impatience of their followers, and the provocation of their enemy, would cause.

A silence of some length succeeded this proposal; the chiefs appeared not fully to comprehend the meaning of Peralta, and Ferrante Luchese requested an explanation.

"Our cause," answered Adriano, "is that of justice; we are assembled to deliver ourselves from intolerable oppression, and to punish a long course of injuries against ourselves and fellow-citizens. We have used all the means we have of open

war, and since these have failed, stratagem and private revenge must have their way. In every nation, and in every age, when tyrants have fallen, by whatever means their end was compassed, succeeding generations have approved and justified the hand which struck the blow. By one great act of slaughter, our island was delivered from its French oppressors, and the name of Giovanni di Procida will for ever be consecrated in the memory of every true Sicilian. Let us do for Sciacca what the Sicilian Vespers did for our forefathers; let us, as they did, lull our foes into a state of fancied security, and having persuaded them to lay aside their arms, let us resume our own, and fulfil our purposed vengeance. The disposition of Giacomo is bold and confident; he may be tempted to trust our faith, and made to feel our resolution. Pandolfina thus cut off, the rest will fall an easy conquest."

When Adriano had concluded, silence again prevailed till Ferrante once more addressed him—"I believe, signor barone,

I shall speak the sentiments of all our friends, at least of all whom I should wish to see amongst the number, in requesting that we may be no more insulted by your dastardly advice. I am no orator; I cannot recount all the successful murders in which the offenders have escaped the hands of the hangman: to yourself I leave such studies, and you will, I doubt not, one day, find them serviceable. We are, signor Peralta, a band of soldiers and of gentlemen, met to avenge our wrongs in open warfare. Had he required the hand of an assassin, count Luna would not have summoned together his family to seek for one: but I will not waste the time of these brave cavaliers in combating an opinion which meets with the same feelings of abhorrence from us all. It appears to me that the only want from which we at present suffer is that of artillery. Could we once succeed in making a breach in the wall, there would be little danger ~~in that~~ our brave followers would ~~surely~~ <sup>soon</sup> enter into the interior; and had we not a vi

portunity of meeting upon equal terms our superior numbers and our equal bravery must be victorious. It is not probable, as no impression has been made upon his outworks, that we shall find Perollo more inclined to submission than before the contest began; he will argue from our offers that we feel our weakness, and consequently reject the treaty, which will tend only to spread alarm through our already-dispirited troops."

As Luchese paused for a moment, Adriano again began—"I did not expect from signor Ferrante the very temperate reproof I have received; but I am not desirous of railing in return, or I might ask how his high and mighty spirit could be amongst the foremost in the unexpected attack upon the vassals of Perollo, or in the slaughter of the insolent Statella? I would surely have been more accordant with his lofty and romantic notions, I have sent his heralds and pursuivants, I announce his honourable intention to cut the throats of the party in their beds, a



According to the strictest rules of chivalry ; but signor Luchese has pointed out the wants under which we labour, and discovered the errors of others ; may I venture to request he will discover a remedy, and by his prodigious ingenuity furnish us with the artillery we stand in need of."

Luchese listened without heeding the taunts of Adriano, and replied with temper to his question—" I have been informed that Francisco Perollo, the captain of the city, has fled from his post. We have the honour to see amongst our friends the barone del Nadore and the brave Maurici, who, being the only two of the Giorati capable of acting, what prevents them from commanding the city artillery to be delivered to our use, and to what better purpose can these guns be put than to secure the freedom and welfare of the citizens?"

The proposal of Ferrante was warmly approved, and the Giorati called on for their consent.

Del Nadore highly extolled the wisdom

of Luchese and the plan he proposed, but declined giving the order himself, and wished to put the whole upon Maurici.

Don Sigismund however declared that he did not wish to involve either of the gentlemen in future trouble, and ordered Luchese to remove the guns as soon as morning dawned.

Pugiades made one more fruitless effort for peace, which had but little chance of being attended to, and concluded by thanking Luchese for the declaration of his sentiments on Adriano's proposed scheme of treacherous assassination, in reprobating which he said every honourable man amongst them must have united.

Stung by his censure, Adriano impatiently observed that don Michele Pugiades, the advocate and the relation of Perollo, might well attempt to excite discord between the friends of count Luna, though the fate of that impertinent spy Ferrara might have been a lesson to all who joined in their councils only to weaken and betray them.

"Count Luna," said Pugiades, "has this nefarious and abusive partisan your countenance, in thus threatening and calumniating your friends and allies?"

"The vehemence of Peralta, and his attachment to our cause, have betrayed him into a warmth," answered Luna, "for which he will, I know, hereafter apologize."

"Count Luna," replied Pugiades, "this is not sufficient; you must disown his insolence. I had hoped that the rebuke he met with from the gallant Luchese would have proceeded from yourself; your conscience may find some plea to exculpate your silence, but for the aspersions he has dared to cast on me, and the threats he has presumed to hold forth, I require from you a disavowal."

Luna was about to reply in wrath, but was interrupted by Luchese, who protested against prolonging any cause for discord amongst themselves.

Sigismund recollected himself, and declared his disapprobation of the conduct of

Peralta; though not very graciously made, the concession was received by don Michele, and the party separated.

The mind of the countess Caltabellotta during the scenes which had passed was involved in a conflict of passions which at times had been nearly insupportable. To obtain full and ample vengeance against the house of Perollo was the first wish of her heart, and to obtain it through the valour and conduct of don Sigismund, the summit of her ambition; yet now that all her long-cherished hopes were on the eve of fulfilment, she trembled for the event. That victory must be the final reward of their exertions, was what she never thought of doubting; but the price at which it might be purchased she dreaded to consider. It was possible that Sigismund might fall. The anxiety of Della Bardia to arrange the claims of Francisca, in case of such an event, had pressed the subject upon her mind, and when once the scene of blood began—when she heard the clang of arms, the thunder of the hostileartil-

lery, and witnessed the hurry and preparation for the acts of carnage around her, she could not but remember that the heir of Luna and Peralta was vulnerable and mortal as the meanest of his followers; and when she reflected on the dreaded Accursi, she trembled at the idea either of his life or death: from the scene of action she had messengers incessantly; her time was principally spent in her private oratory, and her vows for the safety of her son most fervent and unceasing; if there was one feeling in the breast of the countess Luna which resembled virtue, it was maternal love. In Sigismund was centered all her pride, all her ambition; and to exalt his name and honour was the study of her life. He was the idol to which she had sacrificed every feeling but hatred and revenge.

With impatient anxiety she watched the countenance of every one who brought her tidings, to anticipate, if possible, their details. At length came one whose face

spoke him the bearer of ill. The countess held her breath for an instant, as she looked at the man—"Is he dead?" she exclaimed.

"Not yet," replied the man; "but it is impossible that he can long survive."

The countess stamped in an agony of grief, and was rushing to the door—"Where is he?" she exclaimed—"where is my murdered son?"

The man looked astonished.

"Did you not say count Luna was dying?" she asked, in a voice hoarse from emotion.

"Eccellenza, no!" replied the man, staring as if to ascertain whether her intellects were sound.

"Fool! idiot!" she cried, her grief changed into passion, "why did you answer me in the affirmative?"

"May it please your excellenza," said the man, "I told the truth. I saw the barone della Bardia borne away after his wound, and was dispatched hither by don Marco Luchese to inform you of the event."

When the messenger mentioned the name of Della Bardia, the countess started, and throwing herself into a chair, remained silent for several minutes.

The man proceeded to detail all he knew of the affair, but the lady was too much engrossed by her own reflections to heed him.

"He is not dead," at length she said.

"No," replied the man; "but it is impossible he can recover. He is conveyed to the house of Pietro Imbiagnia, and I dare say one of the monks from San Francisco will soon be with him, to take his confession, and speed his soul to paradise, which may San Pietro soon admit, together with that of your excellenza and myself!" he added, devoutly crossing himself.

The countess again sat some minutes in silent reflection. At length she said, turning to her women—"Order what servants can be found to attend me instantly to the house of Imbiagnia."

"Your excellenza," said one of them,

“will not expose yourself to the confusion of the streets at present?”

“Obey me without loss of time,” was the only reply; and with what few men could be found she took her way to the house whither Della Bardia had been conveyed from the scene of his fall.

Her agony at the idea of any confession he might make, or from any steps which might be taken after his death by those to whom his secret transactions were known, as he had threatened her, in case she attempted to remove him by assassination, now overpowered every other feeling, and what line of conduct to pursue she was undecided. If she could extort from him the knowledge of the place in which Pietro, her tool and confidant, was confined, she thought she should not so much dread the events of a deathbed confession, when his understanding might be represented as deranged.

On arriving at the house, she impatiently demanded to be conducted to the barone della Bardia. The family of Im-

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biagnia had all removed from their residence; in consequence of the tumults, and taken up their abode in a cassino at some distance from the city. Don Pietro was with the troops at the siege, and only two or three domestics left in the house. By them the countess was conducted to the chamber of the wounded baron. He was placed upon a couch, and attended only by one of his own followers and a surgeon; the latter had just examined his wound, and declared his skill of no avail. The patient, he said, might linger for some few hours, or even days; but the ball was so lodged as to render it impossible to extract it, and his services being of no use, he was preparing to retire, for the purpose of rendering assistance to others who stood in need of it, and who were in a less-hopeless condition than Accursi, when, as he was about to quit the room, the countess Caltabellotta entered; she advanced rapidly to the couch, and gazed for some moments on the prostrate form of him whom most she feared and hated upon earth, yet whose

death was an event she contemplated with infinite alarm—"Accursi," she said, "I heard of your misfortune with the deepest sorrow, and am come to render you any aid or consolation in my power."

The wounded man slowly unclosed his eyes; their large dark orbs, now deprived of their fierceness, glared upon her with a glossy lustre, which made her shudder as she beheld him. He appeared to make an effort to speak; the breath rattled in his throat; with a groan the most appalling he again closed his eyes; the blood welled from his wound; he grasped the side of the couch with convulsive strength, and struggled violently for an instant.

"The baron seems incapable of speech," said the surgeon, "and suffers terribly from every attempt: it is cruel to torture him."

"Is there no means of restoring him for an instant to the power of articulation," asked the countess, "at any hazard?"

"None," replied the man, "that I know of. He may possibly recover his

speech in time, but no artificial means can aid it."

"I will remain with my dear kinsman," said the lady to the attendant of Della Bardia; "my women shall wait in the anti-room, and render any assistance I may want."

The man was about to depart, when he endeavoured again to articulate, but in vain; a second struggle and convulsion took place, after which he remained quiet, and the surgeon withdrew, followed by the vassal who had been watching by the wounded man when the countess arrived. The lady closed the door, and entered her women to allow no one to enter unexpectedly, as it might alarm the sufferer.

She seated herself beside the bed and watched the dying hour in silence. He lay for some minutes still and motionless: his eyes closed, his respiration difficult, and his body at times convulsed in mortal agony. Could she but restrain her feelings, the countess might have felt at peace for ever, for the person

state of the sufferer made her hopeless of attaining this end. It was true, there was now no fear of any confession being made by him which might betray her secret ; but he had always informed her that there was some other depository beside his own breast, which the event of his death would throw open to the world, and with this anticipation she was now tortured almost to distraction.

At length the eyes of Della Bardia again unclosed. The countess watched with intense anxiety every motion of his features ; he looked towards her, and fixed his regards steadily upon her—" Do you know me, Della Bardia ?" she asked.

He appeared to attend to the sound of her voice. She sank on her knees beside the couch—" Accursi," she said, " your fate in this world is decided. As you need mercy for your manifold offences, have compassion upon me ; restore the pledges you possess ; give me some intimation where they may be found, and where the wretched Pietro is now confined."

A slight convulsion crossed the features of the wounded man, but he gave no sign of compliance with her prayer.

“ Accursi,” she continued, “ if you have a wish on earth—if you have a command to be fulfilled, by all the saints in Heaven, it shall be complied with, so you but relieve my anxious suspense! Concealment can no longer be of use to you. The exposure of my errors to the world would but disgrace count Luna and our family, bring dishonour on our house, and advance no purpose of your own. Hear me, Della Bardia—you are going to your long account ; the crimes you have been guilty of in this life are numerous and heavy ; release me from my suspense, and all the spiritual treasures and indulgences of the church shall be purchased to release you from the flames of purgatory.”

A fresh convulsion shook the frame of the sufferer ; he groaned heavily, writhed his body in torture, and relapsed into insensibility.

For some hours he continued with occasional symptoms of returning sense, and appeared to struggle hard with the agonies of death, which did not however release him from his sufferings. The countess remained with him, at every interval tormenting him by her importunities, making every promise she could think most probable to tempt him to remove her fears, yet ignorant whether her prayers were comprehended, and, worse than all, without having her anxieties lessened or relieved.

Don Sigismund and several of the chieftains of the party visited the house of Imbiagnia; but Della Bardia paid little attention either to their entrance or departure, except once, when he apparently made a faint attempt to detain count Giorgio with him. This movement, however, was only observed by the countess, whose purpose it did not suit to notice it; but it fixed a suspicion at once upon her mind, that this bosom friend of Accursi was

the repository of his secret, and she resolved to watch him accordingly.

In the Casa di Perollo the events of the day had been a subject of considerable satisfaction; they had indeed lost several men, but the destruction of their enemies had been as ten to one; and the principal chiefs of the party, with the exception of the count Sambuca, had escaped from the danger without a wound. The valour and exploits of don Paolo were the theme of every tongue, and the castle resounded with his praises.

The baroness now began to look with more confidence to the final issue of the contest, and every day she thought that the succours of their friends must be at hand—a subject which was seldom absent from her mind. The strength of the fortress had been sufficiently tried to give well-grounded assurance that it could for many days resist, as it had done, the assaults of the besiegers, who must be considerably weakened and disheartened by every fruitless effort.

The baroness Solanto suffered severely from the constant tumult and alarm, and her friends even feared that if the siege lasted but a few days longer, she must sink under her weakness.—The count Sambuca, though severely wounded, was not considered as at all in a dangerous state, and received every assistance which the kindness and care of his hostess could give. His own lady, from the first moment of the accident, persisted in declaring that his wounds were mortal, and it was long before she could be persuaded to visit him, and not until his desire to see her had been repeatedly announced. The baroness and Marguerita at length persuaded her to obey his wishes, and she was conducted to the couch of her wounded husband.

“ You have alarmed yourself very needlessly, dear Theresa,” said the count: “ my accident, though a painful one, yet will be of no worse consequence than that of rendering me a useless burthen to my friends, and of preventing me from return-



ing the favour of dear Sigismund till he is quieted by some other hand."

"Oh! don't deceive yourself and me, Sambuca!" said the lady; "you must die—indeed, indeed you must—you don't look like a living man. Bless me! you are as pale as a spectre! Oh, Santa Radegonda! he is going! Maria delli Gianni, defend me!"

"The loss of blood I have suffered," said the count, "has perhaps taken the colour from my cheeks; but assure yourself I shall speedily be better, and that I do not feel at all like a dying man."

"Loss of blood," continued the lady, "and what kills people but loss of blood? However, I am always wrong: I never can judge of what will happen. Depend upon it, you will be dead before to-morrow, and I a wretched widow."

Here she burst into a violent access of grief.

"You would not wish to interrupt this time, I hope, Theresa," answered she, "and do not thus distress me by your remarks."

tions; they are perfectly groundless, and prevent you from being the comfort to me I had hoped to find; but you seem to want consolation, instead of being able to give it."

"Consolation!" sobbed the countess; "don't be so barbarous as to talk to me of consolation. I have been two hours to-day with my confessor, and all to no purpose. Let me send for him, dear Sambuca, for I can never listen to your last wishes. I would not see you expire for the world, and already feel that I shall not long survive you."

"Well," said the count, "it is useless to argue with you; therefore remain quietly where you now are, and you will soon see how little danger there is of your prognostication being fulfilled, for I feel inclined to sleep, and shall awake, I think, considerably restored."

"Oh, Santa Virgine!" she cried, "he grows lethargic! he is falling into the same state as the baroness Solanto! they will both die before morning, and be

buried in the same grave as we may  
can carry the body in ~~the same manner~~  
sage."

"Silence, Theresa," said the count in  
a tone which the lady did not heed  
and which she was ~~generally~~ ~~well~~ ~~known~~  
She therefore rose in her seat and  
and producing her money, ~~she~~ ~~at once~~  
tate upon the disposition of ~~the~~ ~~body~~  
the difficulty she should ~~find~~ ~~in~~ ~~procuring~~  
mourning with the ~~necessary~~ ~~sum~~.

Seeing the count ~~was~~ ~~about~~ ~~to~~ ~~fall~~ ~~asleep~~,  
sleep, the baroness Perdue ~~was~~ ~~about~~  
to retire, when the count ~~was~~ ~~rising~~  
her beads, stole up, and ~~imposed~~ ~~on~~ ~~her~~  
left with a dying man.

"There is not the slightest danger of  
your receiving any harm: the ~~English~~  
ta will, I know, ~~remain~~ ~~there~~ ~~and~~ ~~it~~ ~~will~~  
you, ~~signature~~ ~~during~~ ~~the~~ ~~absence~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~  
count," replied the baroness.

Her request was ~~complied~~ ~~with~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~  
lady found considerable ~~relief~~ ~~from~~ ~~her~~  
sorrows, in ~~discovering~~ ~~upon~~ ~~the~~ ~~extreme~~  
perverseness and ~~conduct~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~countess~~.

who, she was sure, would only live for the express purpose of contradicting her opinions—a rule he had followed without any deviation since the first fortnight after their marriage.

CHAPTER III.  

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Chi la pace non vuol, la guerra l'abbia ;

Che penuria giammai non fu di risse.      TASSO.

EARLY on the morning of the ensuing day, Ferrante Luchese was dispatched to the ramparts of the city, to remove the artillery to such situations as were best adapted to the bombardment. The populace, without a leader, and without arms, could only express their affection for Pandolfina by secret prayers for his deliverance, and smothered curses against his enemies.

The partisans of Luna were in fact absolute masters of the city, and seized, without opposition, whatever arms they wanted. The cavalry were dismounted, and by means of their horses, eight of

the largest pieces of ordnance were conveyed to their appointed stations, part of them being placed near the Porta di San Nicholas, where bastions were thrown up, and the pieces levelled at the northern tower and principal gateway, the post so gloriously defended by don Paolo. The remainder of the cannon were placed against the Porta del Catogno, and their fire directed against the western tower, and the walls which encircled the inner court.

This new device of the enemy was seen by don Giacomo with some consternation, and though he manifested no dismay, yet he could not but feel the peril of his situation.

“It is their last resource,” said don Paolo, “and will fail, as all the rest have done.”

At length, however, the perseverance of don Ferrante in the one point, and of count Luna in the other, overcame all difficulties, and their batteries were opened with a tremendous fire towards the castle. The loss on both sides was great, more exten-



save such of his wounded soldiers as could be recovered from the fallen fragments: they were conveyed to a remote part of the building, but the numbers increased so rapidly, that it was almost impossible to assist them all.

The noise made by the fall of so large a mass of building thundered through the city, and shook the ground with its violence. The shock within the castle was far more appalling; the baroness, pale with terror, threw her arms round her children; the countess Sambuca screamed, and was joined by most of the ladies.

Marguerita was silent for a moment—"God will not abandon us, my beloved mother!" at length she exclaimed, taking the hand of her benefactress.

"My husband!" said the baroness; "oh! who will relieve this agonizing suspense?"

"I will endeavour," replied the orphan of Landolini.

"Oh no! not you, my child: do not leave me."

As she spoke Cosmo Luchese entered,



## THE HISTORY OF THE

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the eyes of the baroness. She feared to ask if no succours had yet arrived, having felt the distress she inflicted in asking often for a consolation which he who most wished it could not give her—"Tell me the worst, Pandolfina," she said at length.

"Why," he replied, "we have lost many brave fellows, and I fear Celano is amongst them."

"My brother!" screamed the countess.

"I fear is amongst the slain."

Her grief now seemed sincere and piteous.

"I have ordered Sambuca to be removed to the eastern side of the castle," continued don Giacomo; "and thither, ladies, I would wish you to follow him; these apartments are no longer secure."

"The baroness Solanto must not be left," observed madame Pandolfina.

"As soon as we have extricated all our wounded men from the ruins," replied don Giacomo, "she shall be attended to, and for the present she is perfectly safe:

let me instantly remove you from this place. I rely securely on Pugiades, and will inform him of your having taken refuge on the side of the castle where he is stationed; you will then meet with no further disturbance."

"Can no accommodation with count Luna be made through him?" asked the baroness.

"We are not in a condition to make it necessary," replied Perollo. "It is a last resource, and when requisite, we will use it."

The ladies were now escorted by don Giacomo and Luchese to a place of greater security, where the wounded men were also conveyed; on their way they saw several whom their comrades were removing.

"My services may be of use here, signor," said Marguerita; "will you allow me to exert them?"

"Gratefully, my child," said don Giacomo.

"Marguerita has forestalled me in her

offer," said the baroness, "which the alarm of the moment prevented me from making."

"The number of those who stand in need of assistance," said Perollo, "I am sorry to say is very great; but you may be of infinite service to many of them."

Several ladies, incited by the example of Marguerita and her benefactress, requested to accompany them; and Perollo led the way to the place where the unfortunate men were, and the scene which presented itself here was dreadful. The mangled and bleeding forms of some scarcely presented the appearance of humanity, so crushed and lacerated were they by the fall of the tower, and their attempts to disengage themselves from the ruins; that life remained in some could only be known by the deep and hollow groans which issued from their tortured bodies; whilst those who had suffered less still exhibited a variety of misery appalling even to Perollo.

Several of the females lost their courage

and resolution at the sight, and were obliged to be taken from the spot. The baroness was for some time incapable of any exertion, so great was her horror and distress. Marguerita still preserved her presence of mind and self-possession; pale as a spectre, and trembling from the excess of her feelings, she was compelled to struggle violently with herself to overcome the weakness of her nature; but remembering that every moment she remained inactive she might be prolonging the anguish of those around her, she was soon enabled to render material benefit. By the directions of the surgeon and the priest who resided in the castle, she was ere long actively employed in binding up wounds for some, or forming bandages for the broken limbs of others; and the baroness in a short time rendered assistance also.

The presence of don Giacomo was required elsewhere, and bestowing his blessing on their humanity, he withdrew, to

watch the progress of the besiegers. A fatal discovery was at length made; the ammunition of the castle began to fail; as long as it was possible, Pandolfina concealed the fact, lest it should damp the hearts of his little band; but at length it could no longer remain unknown.

“Strip the lead from the buildings,” cried don Paolo, “and while one stone remains upon another, let us stand by our walls, and we must be victorious at last; or if we fall, let us fall like men and soldiers, and sell our lives at a price which will make our foes rue their costly purchase.”

The roofs of the buildings were soon stripped, and a supply of ball provided by the ingenuity of Perollo, with which the contest was carried on with little diminution of vigour. Luchese had destroyed some of the buildings which were exposed by the fall of the tower and wall, but without deriving much benefit by his exertions. Don Giacomo however found the weakness of his party increasing, and resolved at length to try the effects of treaty.

A white flag was hoisted over the eastern battlements, and a parley demanded with don Michele Pugiades, who instantly attended the summons.

Don Giacomo expressed his obligations to him for his conduct during the outrages against him, and requested his good offices in procuring terms with don Sigismund.—“Our friends,” he observed, “must soon arrive from Geraci and Partanna, but I do not wish to involve so useless an effusion of blood as must ensue, and am willing to comply with any requisitions which are reasonable and honourable.”

Pugiades expressed his willingness to undertake the embassy, and lamented the scenes which had occurred. After friendly salutation, the two cavaliers parted; Perollo returning to inform the baroness of his proceedings, and Pugiades to endeavour to persuade count Luna to listen to terms.

Sigismund was at the time deliberating with Ferrante Luchese on the propriety of continuing their efforts on the western

side. Don Ferrante had represented the inutility of the labour he had been all day employed in.—“If,” he added, “we reduce the whole of this side to a mass of ruins, it will still be impracticable to enter, and we cannot do don Giacomo a greater service than to waste our time and ammunition on such devices.”

“My errand,” said don Michele, when he joined the party, “will, I hope, make all further debate upon the subject useless. Perollo has empowered me to demand from count Luna what he requires from him; he is willing to stop the further effusion of blood, and to accommodate matters in any way don Sigismund may wish, provided they militate not against his reputation and honour. A more frank and open submission cannot be required; and I trust, signor, your generosity will not ask any thing injurious from an enemy, who must have purchased your respect by his gallantry and conduct.”

“For Pandolfina,” interrupted Luchese,



"I have little to say; he has acted like a man and a cavalier; but the display of heroic valour I yesterday witnessed in don Paolo, when scores of our dastards fled before him, has made me impatient to embrace him as a friend; and whatever be the event of your treaty, don Michele, I shall ever hold him in the highest estimation, and would venture my life in his defence at any time."

"He murdered Gilberto," said Luna, frowning.

"He killed him like a soldier," replied Luchese; "when I fall, may Heaven grant it be by the sword of a gentleman, and not by the hand of such a cowardly assassin as the baron Adriano!"

"This recurrence to the conduct of Peralta," answered don Sigismund, "is not pleasant to me, signor Luchese; I beg it may not be repeated."

"I am sorry, count Luna, that my observations are so grating to your feelings; I would that the conduct of your kinsman had been equally so."

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may meet the approbation

Don Sigismund was silent

"To be sure," replied  
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"Hostilities may cease,"  
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CHAPTER. 101  
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"Count Luna," said Pugiades, "you will not object to listen to such terms as may meet the approbation of your friends."

Don Sigismund was silent.

"To be sure," replied Luchese, "the count will now act with honour and liberality, worthy of himself and his cause."

"Hostilities may cease for the present," said Luna, "and we will deliberate on our future conduct towards Perollo; attend me two hours hence at Luna Castle."

Pugiades, without further delay, rode to the north side of the Casa di Perollo, and ordered the bombardment to cease, which was obeyed, and Pandolfina knew that his embassy had been received.

Luchese was ordered to see the guards posted, and the artillery properly defended; and Sigismund returned to Luna Castle, where he was almost immediately joined by Adriano.

"The firing has ceased," said the latter; "I was seeking you to ascertain the cause."

"It was by my command," replied

Luna ; " Perollo has tendered his submission."

"Submission!" ejaculated Adriano; "can the mighty Pandolfina descend so low as to submission? your excellenza will, I hope, accept no peace-offering but his head."

"Surely there may be some intermediate course determined on; I have summoned my friends, and will take their counsel on the subject."

"Then, count Luna," answered Peralta, "your cause is ruined; your murdered friends have died unavenged; those who remain are delivered up as victims to the wrath of Pandolfina; your reputation is sullied, and the house of Luna will have fallen from its high and palmy state of honour and grandeur, and may make what speed it can, to secure its future existence beneath the shelter and shade of the aspiring Perollo."

"You are too vehement," replied don Sigismund; "you last night betrayed yourself to the censures of Pugiades, and

it was but a few minutes back that Luchese cast in my teeth the sacrifice I made to your feelings by my silence; you must be aware, Peralta, that I have frequently deprecated the idea of private assassination, and that my heart acceded to all the indignation expressed by don Ferrante; but I preferred being implicated in your cause, to adding the public weight of my dissatisfaction to the reproaches you met with from our other friends. You will meet us here speedily in council."

"Some means must be devised," said Adriano, "of offering such terms as cannot fail to be rejected; this may sooth our doubtful friends, will ensure us for the night should the allies of Pandolfina arrive, and may give us an opportunity to discover the secret strength or weakness of our enemies. Your excellenza will not in sincerity, I hope, listen to any terms of accommodation with Perollo, for by what ties can he be bound? what oaths, what bonds, what vows, what protestations, now made, can shield us from fu-

ture danger, backed with the viceregal power, as he is? what force shall we possess to compel him to fulfil them? His loyalty forsooth will then enforce his most unwilling sentence to condemn the foes of peace and justice, or he will ostensibly yield up the sword of punishment to Monteleone's myrmidons, and rest contented with directing where its blow shall light. Or, say we now obtain a full and ample act of amnesty, of peace, of submission, and oblivion. The amnesty and peace will be for Giacomo; he will submit indeed to circumstances, and bury in oblivion every remembrance of his present vows and promises. Every occasion will be sought to find offences in those who have wished the downfall of his tyranny, and without the means of resistance, we shall one by one fall victims to the enemy our folly and weakness spared."

When the chiefs of the Luna party assembled, Pugiades stated the substance of the parley he had held with Perollo,

and urged the cause of peace; proposing that guarantees should be given for the future good conduct of Pandolfina; that himself and all his friends should be bound by every tie of honour to aid the adherents of count Luna in obtaining pardon from the emperor, and that they should publicly acknowledge the lenity of the party in withdrawing their arms.

Talyavia, Luchese, Infontanetta, and several more, were urgent to have these proposals accepted.

“Let me also,” said Adriano, “speak, and lend my voice to the cause of reconciliation. I agree entirely with don Michele, in considering it proper to accept the offer of Perollo, and think the terms he has proposed are easy, safe, and honourable: but one thing yet remains undecided—the fate of donna Costanza di Solanto; count Luna cannot in honour still leave his affianced bride a prisoner with Perollo. She has been entrapped into a residence with the enemy of her betrothed husband; she has been exposed



to the solicitations and attentions of Pandolfina's son, who doubtless profited by his fine figure and specious manners. On her account don Sigismund has been calumniated, insulted, and disgraced. Let some consideration of what he has suffered in this way be taken into the account. Let count Luna remember his visit to the cassino, the treatment he there met with, and then declare what apology he will consider necessary, for this and all the other hostile acts of the party of Perollo. I am willing to shew them lenity, to treat them with generosity; but I think in this instance some slight acknowledgment of the wrong is necessary."

The countenance of Luna, during this speech of Adriano, was dyed with the deepest crimson at the recollection of the events which it had called up; every pacific feeling was swept away by the violence of passion; and in a voice hoarse from agitation, he swore, that, unless Perollo would kneel before him for pardon, and kiss his feet in token of submission,

no power or entreaties should stop him in his course of vengeance.

"And is this then your answer, signor?" asked Pugiades.

"It is," replied Sigismund; "and I shall not hold that man my friend who strives to alter my resolves."

Don Michele unbuckled his sword, and cast it before the feet of Luna.—"Don Sigismund," he said, "I entered into your party to reduce by open force the power and insolence of don Giacomo Perollo, and have been betrayed into the society of assassins and rebels. The murder of Geronimo Ferrara was accomplished before aid could be afforded. Remonstrances would have been useless, and I remained a silent auditor of the disgraceful act. The butchery of an Imperial envoy I was removed from aiding and abetting. Since this I have been invited by your friend and confidant to join in a scheme of treachery and murder, and am now outraged by a reply equally disgraceful to you, and those who would deliver

it. I stand here unarmed; you may dispatch me to join the slaughtered Ferrara; but henceforth I renounce your alliance, and will shun your society, as a disgrace to a nobleman and a cavalier; but I will not join the standard of your foes."

"Cut him down!" cried Luna, stamping with passion, and drawing his sword.

Luchese threw himself before don Michele; Talyavia and some of his friends interfered, and calmed in some slight degree the fury of Sigismund.

"I shall finish my declaration," continued Pugiades, "and withdraw; for the present, I will be indebted to these gallant men who honour Sigismund di Luna by their friendship for protection from his violence. I have joined in an alliance with him, and though I here renounce and abandon it, I will not league me with his enemies, although I consider their cause as that of justice, loyalty, and virtue. I shall now seek my followers, and retire."

As Pugiades withdrew, Luna called

furiously to detain him ; but he passed on uninterrupted by the assembled party, and unheeding the violence of the count, whose fury appeared to be diverted from Perollo to don Michele ; he reproached his friends for having restrained him from avenging the insult he had received, and accused himself for his folly, in having admitted into his party one who was connected with his adversary.

Of all the assembly, Luchese was the only one who ventured to defend Pugiades, or to remonstrate against the ungenerous answer which don Sigismund still persisted in returning to the request of don Giacomo. This drew upon him the severest indignation and anger of the infuriated count. He answered quietly to all the abuse which Sigismund lavished upon him, and seemed to pity his weakness, rather than to dread his passion ; but begged to decline having any thing to do with the delivery of this message ; “ which,” he added, “ if don Giacomo receives without hoisting the bearer’s head

upon his flag-staff, he must have more command of temper than some of his enemies."

"The baron Adriano and don Bartolomeo Talyavia," said Luna, sullenly, "will be the bearers of my reply to the request of Pandolfina."

Neither of these gentlemen wishing to provoke the anger of the count, they acquiesced in his decision; and he again repeated his demand, that Pandolfina should kneel before him, and beg forgiveness for his past offences, and at the same time kiss his feet in token of submission and defeat.—"Let this reply be instantly conveyed," continued Sigismund, "that we may know how to proceed when morning dawns—whether to renew our final acts of warfare, and beat down the poor remaining shelter of our foes, or to prepare for the reception of the conquered."

The two emissaries repaired, without loss of time, to the castle of don Giacomo, declared the purpose of their coming, and were admitted within the portal. Perollo

came to meet them, and inquired who count Luna had sent?

"The baron Adriano and don Bartolomeo Talyavia."

"I shall treat only with those whom I consider as men of honour," said Pandolfina, as he approached. "The baron Adriano may withdraw. Perollo is not yet fallen so low as to hold converse with the instigator of Ferrara's murder. Allow me, signor Talyavia, to conduct you to a place more worthy your rank and office."

He then took the hand of don Bartolomeo, and led him from the portal, leaving Peralta surrounded by the guards, that he might not take advantage of his embassy to pry into the weakness of the interior. Don Paolo, at the command of his kinsman, attended to hear the result of the negotiation.

Left with the soldiers, Adriano lamented, in terms of great compassion, the useless sacrifice which would be made of their lives by the pride of Pandolfina.—"We bring him," he said, "the most noble and

generous terms; all that count Luna requires, is, that he will make some slight acknowledgments for past insults, and give his promise to injure us no farther."

"The baron," replied one of the men, "will not reject such terms as these."

"Then never trust my word," said Adriano, "he will consider it beneath his dignity to yield, and will rather sacrifice the lives of all his faithful and brave defenders, than make a single promise to abstain from offering injuries to the peaceful inhabitants of Sciacca. Count Luna, my brave fellows, has seen and admired your gallant conduct. He would gladly open his ranks to let you pass whenever you chose, and by accepting these his offers, you would save your commanders lives, and avert the destruction of your wives and children. Perollo must then submit, and will be received to the same honourable capitulation we now offer." Seeing some of the men listen with attention, Adriano renewed his plausible arguments. He pointed out the injury they

were doing even to don Giacomo himself, by supporting him in any farther contest—the useless waste of their own blood—the danger to which they would expose their wives and children, should the castle be taken by assault, and given up to plunder. To this he added the most tempting offer of rewards from Luna ; extolled the magnanimity with which they would act by sacrificing their private feelings to the public good ; and finally succeeded in persuading them to promise, that if the baron rejected the present proposals, they would on the morrow march out, and leave their posts to be defended by those whom he could persuade to uphold his obstinacy and perverseness. These arrangements were scarcely made, and the seeds of disaffection sown, when Talyavia returned, and merely stating that his offers had been rejected, quitted the castle with Peralta.

Don Giacomo had conducted him into a private apartment, where don Paolo, don Geronimo, and don Giovanni Perollo, were assembled. Talyavia declared his



own wish for peace, and lamented the reply he was compelled to deliver.

“Be it for peace or war,” replied Pandolfina, “you find me equally prepared; no motive prompted me to seek this amnesty, but a desire to spare the effusion of more Sicilian blood, and to relieve the anxiety of the females who have taken refuge within our walls.”

Talyavia repeated the insulting message of count Luna.

Don Giacomo laid his hand upon his sword—half drew it from its scabbard; but after a moment’s silence and suspense, returned it.

“Sorry should I be in any thing to resemble Sigismund di Luna, or on the spot I had avenged the insult you have dared to offer me. The passion, the ignorance, the malignity of Luna, might prompt him to refuse accommodation, upon any terms of honour, liberality, or justice; but I hardly thought the man could have been found, who would have ventured to repeat the audacious offer to Perollo. Nei-

ther Luna nor yourself deserve a reply, nor shall I deign to make one. Our walls may be reduced to a mass of ruins by your artillery—the friends and followers of my house may, and I doubt not will, fall around me, and Perollo himself be exposed defenceless to the vengeance of his enemies—his spirit will still defy their menaces, and take its flight as unconquered as if it mounted from a field of victory. But to-morrow may bring a more fatal doom to Luna than to Pandolfina. Geraci and Partanna may arrive. But I will hold no farther parley.—My friends, conduct this insolent (whose forfeit head might well have paid the penalty his tongue deserved) beyond our outward gate.”

The orders of Pandolfina were obeyed, and the partisans of Luna returned to recount the success of their ill-omened embassy.

CHAPTER IV.  
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Then died lamented, in the strength of life,  
A valued mother and a faithful wife ;  
Call'd not away, when time had loos'd each hold  
On the fond heart, and each desire grew cold ;  
But when to all that knit as to our kind,  
She felt fast bound as charity can bind.      CRABBE.

THE alarm excited in the mind of the baroness Solanto by the falling of the tower, and incessant bombardment of the part of the castle in which she lay, had produced a violent effect upon her weakened frame ; repeated fainting fits had reduced her so low, that all around her began to entertain the greatest fear for the final issue of her sufferings, which seemed to be drawing near their close. It was with difficulty she had been removed to the eastern side, and though every precaution was taken by the care of her

friends, it was impossible to conceal from her the increasing danger by which she was surrounded ; towards night, after the firing had ceased, she obtained a little rest, but awoke from it in such a state as convinced her that it would be the last sleep from which she should awake to the cares of life ; as her body became more and more enfeebled, her mind seemed to become more calm, and her resolution stronger. She requested the medical attendant to be sent for, and as soon as he appeared, insisted upon Costanza and the baroness Pandolfina leaving her.

When they had departed, she, with great calmness, desired the surgeon to feel her pulse, and to tell her how long she should survive. Seeing that he hesitated in replying, she said—" Do not fear, signor, to shock me, by telling me that my release is at hand ; I know it must be near, but I wish to be informed how near, that I may endeavour to prepare those who are to remain some time longer in this scene of terror ; and besides, sir, recollect that no ten-

demerit to my feelings were the source of  
for suffering me to be so long in thinking  
for her sake. Now tell me how you can  
feeble frame may come to rest."

"I fear, ~~dearest~~, ~~dear~~—I can  
not speak with security beyond a few  
hours; but you must be very true."

"I thank you, ~~dearest~~, ~~dear~~—I will leave  
you no longer from the moment that I can  
require your friendly aid in business  
and commerce. I now feel as if I must  
do my duty."

The moment the subject of the resolu-  
ment, ~~Constance~~ ~~replied~~ ~~and~~ ~~expressed~~ the  
serenity of the ~~business~~. ~~Constance~~  
said—"I trust me, ~~dear~~ ~~that~~ ~~you~~ ~~know~~  
Barteleme has given a favourable answer."

"Yes, my child, for me." The tone in  
which she spoke and all that you ~~Con-~~  
stanza dreaded to hear. She ~~replied~~ ~~in~~  
the couch, and had her agonized transi-  
ence in the ~~clashes~~: the ~~business~~ was  
deeply affected as she said—"My child,  
my beloved child! you would not leave  
my parting pangs more intense? ~~Constance~~

it is for you only that I grieve, and then I know you will support yourself, and live to console your father. I feel a firm reliance that he will be restored to you, and the thought comforts me now. Wise and wonderful are the decrees of Providence, my child; but for the capture and consequent detention of your father, which we so lamented, you might have been irrevocably united to count Luna, ere we had discovered his character, and the baneful influence which surrounds him; whatever you may have to bear in future, remember that escape with gratitude."

Listening to her mother had in some degree restored the calmness of Costanza. She knelt beside her, watching every breath she drew with intense anxiety, and fearing that every word might be the last.

Those who have knelt over the form of an expiring and dearly-beloved parent, may in some measure feel for the daughter of Solanto; but not entirely can they judge of the accumulated horrors by which

she was surrounded ; the terrific and deafening noises of the previous day made the stillness of the night more awful ; the glare from the watchfires threw a frightful red light through the chamber ; and she knew, though her mother did not, that the morrow might destroy the hospitable roof that sheltered her, and reduce her noble protector to court death as a refuge from his ruthless foes ; added to all this was the uncertainty about her father's fate ; and who can wonder that, as she pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples, she felt as if life or reason must yield to the scene around her ? Yet she bore her misery in silence, and strove to feel the resignation and reliance which her mother taught.

After a short pause the baroness said—  
“ Thinking of your escape from count Luna, my child, has brought to my memory something the baron Pandolfina said two nights since. It appeared to me like a hint, that he knew his son's attachment

to you; if such is the case, and your own heart replies to it, you have my entire concurrence, and I could wish you were allowed to remain under the care of the baroness Pandolfina; but do not, as you value your duty—do not, I conjure you, dispose of your hand, till either you have your father's consent, or have lost all hopes of his return; and when you see him, tell him, all that affection the most fervent, confidence the most devoted, and respect the most unshaken, could inspire, I have felt during my life, and shall to my last hour, for him—tell him, I entreat his pardon for my faults, and bequeath him my most ardent gratitude, for a portion of happiness I think unequalled, and which I owe to him."

The corporeal weakness of the baroness here overcame her mental energy, and she seemed to be expiring; Costanza tried to support her, and in the agony of knowing not whether to leave her and seek help, or stay and perhaps see her die for want of it, she uttered a piercing shriek, which,



in the stillness of the hour, rang through the neighbouring apartments, and speedily brought the baroness and Marguerita to her assistance.

The cordials they administered to the baroness Solanto revived her a little, and in a few minutes she asked for the father Angelini. He was instantly summoned, and the baroness and Marguerita withdrew into the next room with the almost-distracted Costanza, who, as soon as she was away from the danger of disturbing her mother, gave unrestrained loose to her misery and despair. The baroness embraced her with affectionate tenderness, imploring her to have pity upon them all, and endeavour to support herself with calmness; she confessed that her own distresses were at the moment greater than she knew how to bear—"Heaven alone can foresee," she said, "what to-morrow may produce, whether relief or an end to every hope of comfort to me on this side the grave. Do not, my Costanza, add to

the misery of my devoted family ; preserve something to my Federico for the much that he may lose ; you too, at the last, may perhaps have power over the heart of this merciless Luna, who would quench his hatred in the blood of the Perollo race. Recover your composure, dear child, for your own, your mother's, for all our sakes."

Poor Marguerita, whose distresses had begun to yield to kindness in those around her, and pious resignation in herself, felt all her woes renewed by the sight of similar suffering in Costanza, and in the sorrow of her adopted parents ; she paced the room, trying to restrain the gushing tears which would force themselves from her eyes. From time to time she would approach Costanza, embrace her, attempt to say something to comfort her, and then, at the sight of her grief, be overpowered by sympathy, and again quit her to recover herself.

Father Angelini did not remain long with the baroness Solanto before he begged

her daughter and friends to return to her, and went to request the attendance of don Giacomo, who had retired to rest for an hour or two; they found the baroness much weaker, but still perfectly sensible; she affectionately embraced her friend and Marguerita, said a few words of farewell to each, and recommended, with a mother's tenderness, her child to the care of the former. You will be a mother to her when I am gone—will you not, Victoria?"

"I will, I will, if I am spared to my own offspring."

She looked shocked at the appearance of the baron: since she had seen him, three days spent in toil, and the greater part of the nights in watching and directing, added to the feelings which in silence swelled his bosom, for his wife, his children, his friends, and faithful followers, who had fallen around him, his hourly increasing anxiety for the result, which had now almost become despair, could not

fail to shew itself on his face, though no syllable but of hope and encouragement had escaped him; he raised the hand of the sufferer to his lips, and promised, whilst he had life, to protect her child. She held out her arms, as if once more to embrace her daughter, who was kneeling by her. Costanza rose to meet her circling arms. A slight convulsion seemed to agitate her; she looked to the confessor, who held up the crucifix before her, and pronounced the awful sentence—"Resign your soul to him who gave it."—Once she looked from her child to Pandolfina—tried to articulate—could not—looked to heaven—and expired.

What, in the catalogue of human misery, is equal to the frightful silence which follows the departed spirit of those we love, when for a moment we fear to breathe, lest we dissipate the life which still seems hovering round us; and dare not own to ourselves that hope has fled, and left us with the blank reality of death? Such

silence, such deathlike stillness, reigned around the couch of what was the baroness Solanto.

Costanza still remained in the attitude of receiving her last embrace; she uttered no sound; she seemed turned to stone. At length she slowly raised herself upright; the pale and stiffened features of her mother looked not more assailing than did her fixed countenance; no one could speak for a few moments; but at last the confessor took her hand, and said—"My child, he who gave may take away; in his name be comforted."

"Talk not to me of comfort, father! bring hither the tigers of Luna, and shew them what they have done; shew them their glorious achievements. Such a sight would comfort them, perhaps; mine is gone for ever. Sweet saint! what had you done to these destroyers, that they first took away him on whom you leaned for happiness, and then sought to tear down the home which sheltered you? Your angel charity and meekness have often

found excuses for them, when no one else could. No! such sweetness was not fit for earth: tell them that she is gone: would that I were too, for then there would be peace."

Costanza paused, and the baroness folded her arms around her, and tried to lead her away, but the action seemed immediately to restore her recollection, and she said—"No, no! I cannot leave her yet—I know I must, but not yet—I will be very mild in future and dutiful—she bade me; but do not take me from her—do not weep so much—I make every one unhappy—pray forgive me."

She then went and knelt down by the couch, and holding the lifeless hand of her mother, buried her face in the clothes. Marguerita begged to be left with her and father Angelini; and the baron, whose silent sympathy for those around him forced tears down his manly cheek, supported the baroness from the scene of death.

Perollo was soon after summoned to

receive the emissaries of count Luna, when his fruitless and insulting proposals met with so proper a reception from the gallant chief, whose bosom swelled with feelings too indignant to admit for some time of any thoughts of the future consequence of the rejection ; but when he again returned to his family, after taking such precautions as the dilapidated state of the castle made necessary, the distress and anxiety which was so deeply marked on the features of the baroness, recalled him to a full sense of the dangers by which he was surrounded ; still he exerted himself to communicate to others the assurance which he himself could not feel, that their security was a matter of no doubt or anxiety.

“ The attempt to treat with don Sigismund has failed,” said the baroness, with a sigh of despondency.

“ I never had much inclination to receive the insulting dictates of a conqueror,” replied Perollo, “ and am spared this disgrace at present ; to think of which, I was

only tempted by a hope to save the effusion of blood on the part of Luna as well as of myself; they must abide by the consequences of their reply to my offers."

"Can no mediating friend be found," asked the lady, "who possesses influence enough over count Luna to bring him to more reasonable terms?"

"He has cut off all possibility of a compromise," replied don Giacomo; "and I would scarcely expose any of my friends to meet the fate of poor Ferrara."

"There is one alternative which yet might save us all," said the baroness. Perollo replied by a look of inquiry. His wife waited as if for encouragement to proceed, and continued—"In your safety, Pandolfina, is centered the preservation of your friends and family; were you with Geraci or Partanna, or even with the viceroy, don Sigismund would no longer waste his men in fruitless attempts to batter down your walls; you would collect an overpowering force, and the dread of your approach must be to us a stronger



shield, a surer stay, than even your own heroic arm can give us now. We should not dread the further annoyance of our enemies, whilst you were securely armed to avenge any insults to which we might be subject; and under the protection of don Paolo, I could cheerfully await your return, without the distressing anxiety which now tortures me."

The baroness was silent, and don Giacomo looked at her with an aspect something like reproach. She burst into tears—"Forgive me, Victoria," he said; "I did not think to have been instigated by you to a disgraceful flight; but the sad scenes by which we are surrounded weaken all our firmer feelings. Let me hear no more of this," he added, affectionately; "all will yet be well, without my fleeing before this insolent aggressor."

"I should not have ventured," replied the baroness, still weeping, "to have preferred my request, had I not deeply weighed the subject in my thoughts, and fully determined that no disgrace could attach

itself to the name and honour of Perollo, by your retiring for a time before the storm, to collect in person your friends and partisans, and to save the remnant of your followers and family assembled here."

Don Paolo entered as she was speaking.

"This faithful friend," she continued, "shall judge my cause, and will, I know, decide with honour and with prudence."

"It can require no deliberation," answered don Giacomo, "to ascertain that flight must always be disgraceful."

"There are instances," said don Paolo, "in which the timely retreat of one may prove the means of safety to those who remain; and if the force be overpowering to which the retiring party yields, flight then becomes a duty—though unpleasant and distressing, still the duty of a chieftain."

"Bless you for this reply!" ejaculated the baroness.

Pandolfina smiled.—"Paolo," he said, "is doubtless well provided with cases in

point, but none, I think, which will excuse a chieftain who deserts his family and friends, who leaves his faithful soldiers to defend his towers, and to shed their blood in the cause he has himself abandoned."

"Abandoned!" interrupted the baroness—"the cause he seeks to aid, by raising the support from which it must eventually triumph; but don Paolo does not understand my argument."

"I had forbidden you to mention it, but he must now have a pretty clear idea of the subject of our conversation," observed Perollo; "you may proceed."

"I was urging to Pandolfini," she began, "the expediency of his seeking a refuge with Geraci or Partanna, raising what succours he can procure, without the delay with which they seem to proceed, and leaving myself and family beneath the protection of yourself and our other gallant friends. It is against my husband's person the fury of the assailants is directed; and were he once away, their de-

sire to purchase the ruins of our mansion would not be sufficiently strong to urge them on at the hazard of their lives to gain it: with a full conviction that Perollo would speedily return, armed with resistless power for victory and vengeance, I urge him to no disgraceful act, by inciting him to seek our safety and his own; the lingering conduct of Geraci, and the weakness of Francisco Perollo, make it necessary that more energetic measures should be used to collect their forces. Geraci may be with the viceroy, and in whom can we look for the promptness and alacrity with which Perollo himself will act? He leaves us here neither defenceless nor unprotected. His single arm, though strong and powerful, cannot alone support a sinking cause, and our friends have shewn how heroically they can acquit themselves. I am aware that this conduct might be a dangerous example to the men; but when they learn that their chieftain commits the dearest pledges of his love into their hands, to stand or fall together;

when they are assured that he goes on to return with additional support, they will feel encouraged, rather than depressed, by his departure."

"I would not," observed Lord Falkland, "be hasty in adopting or rejecting any plan you propose, signor. I am well aware that the violence of our enemies is principally directed against the Alliance as an individual; but how far the Alliance would mitigate their wrath, or weaken its power and destruction, and direct the force of its suspension its fury, it is impossible to say. At all events, I do not consider the present posture of affairs as making any attempt either to force or to purchase the Alliance is nearly surrounded by hostile and powerful forces, through which it would be difficult, if not impossible, to pass. And even if the attempt would involve numerous ruin to Paduana, and probably to the party: should even prove successful, the confusion and interruption which the prospect of victory will cause, may perhaps succeed in swaying. I will still

ingly undertake to remain till the last moment, as the defender of those he may leave. The security of our chief would then perhaps restrain the hands of the assailants, who would fear lest every hour should bring him back with sufficient force to quell their rebellious multitude."

"Well," replied don Giacomo, "you have made a handsome compromise, my friend; and when there is no hope of safety here, I will engage to seek it beyond the walls."

"Were this resolution indeed to be fulfilled, and if in the fatal crisis of affairs (should it be the will of Providence that such should occur), if then you would commit us to the care of don Paolo, and seek a refuge with our distant friends, I should be more reconciled," replied the baroness.

"When Paolo bids me fly, I will obey," said Perollo, who being summoned to attend some affair of consequence, the party separated for a time.

Count Luna received the reply of don

Giacomo, or rather the detail of what had taken place between his messengers and the baron, with threats of vengeance and extermination.

Talyavia having concluded his account of the circumstances which occurred during his interview, Adriano observed that he also had some intelligence to communicate; and with affected humility and calmness related the contemptuous treatment which he had personally met with; rousing still higher the passion of don Sigismund; and finally detailed his successful attempt to excite a spirit of disaffection and desertion amongst the troops of Perollo, in whose custody he had been left when Talyavia withdrew with don Giacomo, assuring the count he might calculate upon the retreat of part of his foes when the assault should be renewed. These tidings excited the greatest satisfaction, and the coming day was impatiently awaited by all the party, who now looked forward with confidence to the

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speedy termination of their fatigue and labour.

With the earliest light count Luna was on horseback, surrounded by his chief officers, and on his way to the scene of havoc and destruction. Infontanetta was ordered to occupy the station which don Michele Pugiades had abandoned in the valley. Ferrante Luchese was stationed on the north, to renew the attack upon the great tower, where don Paolo commanded; and Calogero Calandrino succeeded to the post on the western side, which Luchese had held on the day preceding: as the south side presented no practicable point of attack, and was not likely to afford the besieged an opportunity of flight (being bounded at no great distance by the inaccessible rocks which overhung the sea, and surrounded by the ruined mansions of Cosmo Luchese, Gerónimo and Paolo Perollo), it was now abandoned by the besiegers, who renewed their attacks with violence on the north and on the west.



Upon the first assault made by Luchese, the companions of don Paolo refused to resume their arms; they had resolved no longer to support a fruitless contest, and since don Giacomo had refused to consult their safety, by accepting the honourable terms which they knew had been offered, they would no longer be the victims of his pride and obstinacy.

Astonished at this sudden defection, their commanders exhorted them to return to their obedience, declared the terms which had been offered were such as they would themselves have indignantly rejected, and pointed out the little hope there was of their being received by Luna; to this they replied, that the baron Adriano had given them assurances of favour and protection.

Don Paolo saw that the case was hopeless, but endeavoured by every argument to awaken a sense of honour, and those feelings of attachment which they had so frequently and so ardently professed to cherish for their chieftain and his family.

During the debate, Pandolfina arrived upon the spot, and learned the defection of the party.—“ Let them instantly depart,” exclaimed Perollo. “ Heaven forbid that I should retain one unwilling arm to aid my cause ; let them abandon the chief they have sworn to defend ; let them give up his family and friends to the fury of their murderers, and seek with what satisfaction they can another leader more fortunate than Pandolfina.”

The men appeared to hesitate.

“ Will your excellenza accept the terms offered by count Luna ?” they inquired.

“ No,” replied don Giacomo : “ first let me perish, and let the name of Perollo die with me, rather than be disgraced by such dishonourable submission.”

“ Propose then other terms.”

“ None will be accepted, nor will I condescend to offer them.”

“ Then let us lay down our arms,” cried the ringleader, and they piled their weapons on the tower.

“ Escort them to the gate,” said Gia-

como; "before the sun has set, they will repent them of this dishonour."

Not above ten of the party remained behind, the rest descended the stairs, accompanied by don Paolo, who halted in the portal.—"Once again, my friends," he said, "reflect, and do not stain your late heroic deeds by desertion and by flight."

The men were however deaf to all entreaties, the wicket was thrown open, and they departed. Their approach was hailed by the partisans of Luna with loud shouts of triumph, and they passed unresisted through the hostile squadron. The few remaining friends of Perollo were witnesses of this final blow to their hopes from the dilapidated walls, but prepared to meet the increasing dangers with a spirit and resolution worthy of such a chieftain and of such a cause.

With fresh ardour the bombardment recommenced. Ferrante Luchese had observed the useless labour which had been expended in attempting to destroy the

great tower and gate, and turned his fire upon a weaker part of the walls, where Pandolfina had lately erected stables for the horses belonging to his retainers. The effect of this was soon visible ; the newly-constructed buildings gave way in every direction, and drew with them in their fall parts of the adjacent bulwarks ; practicable breaches were soon made, and Luchese again prepared to storm the fortress. The exertions of the besieged were greater than could have been supposed possible from men so reduced by fatigue. Their numbers, diminished by death, wounds, and desertion, were scarcely sufficient to man one side of the battlements, and on every part ruin and dismay presented themselves.

By the breaches made by Luchese, the north tower had become nearly isolated from the other parts of the building. The companions of don Paolo were reduced to two or three, and incapable of offering further hostilities. Don Giacomo and a

small body of men still fought from an adjacent turret, but all communication was cut off between him and don Paolo.

The troops of Luchese now began to pour in through the undefended aperture in the walls, and butchered some wounded and defenceless men whom they found in the apartments they had entered. The cries of the sufferers caught the ears of don Paolo; he descended from the tower, and rushed sword in hand amongst the assailants; wherever he turned himself, his foes were scattered before him; his white armour was dyed of the deepest crimson; for a few moments he stopped the ingress of the enemies; but the force of numbers was not eventually to be resisted, and he began to give ground, when Luchese forced his way into the room, where, alone and unassisted, the gallant kinsman of Pandolfina supported himself against a host of foes.

"Your valour, signor, is useless," he said. "I would save your life at the hazard of my own. You may yet be of

service to your friends ; I ask no submission—resign your sword, and mine shall defend you.”

“Thanks, brave Luchese,” replied Perollo ; “ but my existence is useless, and after defeat worthless.”

“ Disarm him then,” cried don Ferrante to his soldiers ; “ but, at the peril of your lives, injure him not.”

His command was soon obeyed, and don Paolo a captive in the hands of the besiegers.

“ For the helpless females and children I demand your quarter, signor Luchese ; for myself, I must yield to numbers.”

Don Ferrante returned his sword.

“ You will not,” he said, “ use this weapon again to resist the force of Luna and Peralta ; and mine, signor, shall now aid you in protecting the defenceless. Where are the ladies ?”

“ On the eastern side, in the interior court,” answered don Paolo.

“ Hasten thither instantly,” said Luchese ; “ as soon as I can quit my post, I

will be with you, which will be before any other of our party can have reached the spot. Don Paolo," he continued, in a tone of authority to those about him, "is my prisoner; treat him no longer as an enemy."

Perollo was then allowed to make his way through the furious crowd, who were filling the northern court, and hastily taking his way to the quarter in which don Giacomo fought, he desired him and his companions instantly to save themselves — "Resistance," he said, "is now useless; I am myself a prisoner, but have secured the safety of the ladies through the generosity of Luchese."

Giovanni and Geronimo Perollo waited no further bidding, but retreating into the interior apartments, escaped through different communications with outer walls; and the whole force of count Luna being drawn to the breach at which Luchese had entered, the avenues were left unguarded.

Pandolfina threw himself for an instant

into the arms of don Paolo—"Commend me to my wife," he said, "to my children and my friends. I shall not yet retire, but will not voluntarily sacrifice my life. Best and most faithful of our devoted race, farewell!"

A few vassals still rallied round their lord, and declared their resolution to share his fate. As don Paolo retired, they closed the portal of the turret, and awaited the coming storm.

The rage of the assailants seemed to know no bounds: every living soul they had encountered, except don Paolo, had instantly been cut in pieces; the very horses in the building through which they had entered were sacrificed to their fury, and two-and-twenty animals were butchered in this indiscriminate massacre.

The troops of Luna now impetuously made their way towards the post which don Giacomo occupied, shouting loudly to the besieged to throw down their arms, to open their gates, and yield to Luna and Peralta. The baron ordered the door



of the tower to be thrown open, and as the enemy crowded to the entrance, poured upon them a shower of balls and arrows: they fell in heaps before the portal.

"Thus shall we surrender our arms, and thus welcome our assassins!" cried Perollo, and another volley from his party arrested the approach of the multitude.

Confusion spread through the crowd; they had expected that the interior of the castle once gained, all resistance on the part of the besieged would cease, when the gallant and unlooked-for defence of don Giacomo caused them again to retreat to the north court.

The chief availed himself of their panic, and prepared for flight, exhorting his companions also to save themselves, and then took his way towards the south side of the building, which was cleared from the assailants. He was followed only by Andrea Carusello, the old and affectionate servant of his house, who for several generations had loved and honoured the lords

of Pandolfina. During the siege he had attended his master through every danger, and now resisted every entreaty to seek his safety with don Paolo and the baroness, peremptorily insisting to follow the fortunes of his lord to the last.

From one of the southern towers the baron prepared to descend, but as Andrea could not be prevailed upon to remain, don Giacomo first endeavoured to provide for the safety of the old man, whom he lowered from one of the windows by a rope; and immediately following him, both reached the exterior of the castle in safety.

The partisans of don Sigismund soon recovered from their temporary dismay, and again rushed forward with redoubled fury, spreading havoc and destruction on every side. The great gates of the castle were beaten down, and afforded free access to the sanguinary ruffians, who thronged in crowds to satiate their vengeance, and to riot in the spoils of Pandolfina's wealthy and magnificent abode.

The ferocious Calandrino seized the ar-

tillery of the castle, and pointing it to the yet-uninjured buildings on the east, began to batter the walls of the apartments in which the females were assembled, regardless of the signs of submission and truce which Luchese and don Paolo had hoisted. The former instantly dispatched a messenger to request the interference of don Sigismund, who commanded the firing to cease, and prepared to take possession of his conquest.

## CHAPTER V.

Già non si deve a te doglia, nè pianto ;  
 Chè, se mori nel mondo, in ciel renasci :  
 E chi dovè ti spogli il mortal manto,  
 Di gloria impresse altre vestigia lasci. Tasso.

THE baroness Pandolfina had repeatedly entreated Costanza to quit the melancholy scene of death, and to remain with herself and the children ; but this she persisted in refusing, and declared her firm resolution to watch by the body of her mother, till the last moment it should be kept from its final abode. Marguerita remained with her, as did also the father Angelini, and occasionally the baroness revisited the mourner ; but from the moment when the bombardment recommenced, she had been so absorbed in the idea of the peril to which her husband and children were ex-

posed, that her thoughts could not wander from their intense anxiety at the event which each succeeding instant might be expected to produce.

For one short moment she had seen Pandolfina, and the sad change in his appearance declared that adverse circumstances had added to their misfortunes. He mentioned not, however, the desertion which had taken place, and which was undoubtedly the eventual cause of his defeat, but still endeavoured to cheer her drooping spirits, and promised to seek safety in flight, should his affairs assume a hopeless aspect.

Dismay and terror seemed to have stopped even the grief of such as had been most loud in their lamentations, previous to the present alarming posture of affairs. The count Sambuca, who had been able to get into the apartment of the baroness, was some support, and kept the ill-timed complaints and loquacious misery of the countess silent. His wounds entirely prevented his being useful in the contest, and

he thought he might be of some service in aiding and consoling the baroness, which he most assiduously endeavoured to do.

With breathless anxiety and alarm the party listened to every sound which they could catch amidst the roar of the artillery ; at length a shout, which seemed to announce their fate, was heard distinctly nearer than any of the confused noises which had before caught their attention. A wounded vassal rushed into the room, and exclaiming—" All is lost !" fell on the floor, and instantly expired.

A second shout, louder and nearer than the first, burst upon their ears before they recovered from the alarm caused by the dying soldier, and the name of Luna was distinctly heard amidst the cries and screams which mingled with the tumult. The baroness threw herself upon her knees, and clasped her arms around her children. The count Sambuca attempted to rise and place himself before the door, when the countess, with a shriek of terror, cast herself upon him, and entreated to

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be saved. He implored her to be tranquil, and to rely on the protection of Heaven. She still continued clinging round him, and vociferating her entreaties to be rescued. He commanded her to be silent, and she obeyed.

After a pause of some moments, which seemed ages to the expectant sufferers, a footstep was heard approaching. The eyes of all were directed to the door; no one either moved or breathed, and don Paolo entered the room. The baroness Pandolfina was the first object of his attention; she was still kneeling with her children round her; her face pale as if death had already seized its victim—"We are lost!" she exclaimed. "The mercy of Heaven alone can save us!"

"I have, I trust, secured the safety of yourself, signora, your children, and companions; these ladies will meet with a generous and gallant protector in the signor Ferrante Luchese."

"And Pandolfina?" asked the agitated wife.

"Is safely escaped, I hope, from the pursuit of his enemies. He fled with his remaining friends a few moments back, and as I came this way, I perceived that his adversaries have not followed him, and he may, I hope, succeed in eluding their search. He is in the hands of Providence, and to its dispensations, whatever they may be, we must submit ourselves."

The baroness bowed her head upon the bosom of one of her children, and wept in silence.

The countess sprung upon the neck of don Paolo, and embraced him with boundless joy—"Tell us the dreadful particulars, Perollo," she said, and was proceeding to pour forth her terrors, when the count commanded her to retire, and not to begin a course of interrogatories, nor to occupy the attention of don Paolo, which must be fully engaged on more important subjects than listening to her effusions.

"The fortress is then in the hands of Lami?" continued Sambuca.

"It is, or it will be so in a short time,"



replied don Paolo. " Luchese commands the party who have entered, and has promised me his protection for the ladies here assembled. Our kinsmen Geronimo and Giovanni have also escaped, and will, I trust, succeed in eluding pursuit till the present dangers have subsided."

Perollo then inquired the cause which had brought the body of the dead retainer into the apartment. Sambuca informed him of the circumstance of his unexpected entrance and instant death; after which don Paolo raised the body, and removed it into an adjacent chamber.

As he was returning, he saw don Ferrante enter the court, and instantly entreated his aid, as the tumult seemed approaching. Luchese joined him immediately, and desired that a white banner might be hoisted on the building, to save it from the attacks of his party; but his order was scarcely obeyed, when the artillery, by command of Calandrino, was opened upon it.

Luchese lost no time in seeking don

Sigismund, and in obtaining his orders to arrest the firing. Count Luna was just entering the castle as don Ferrante met him, and preferred his request.

"We did not war against defenceless women and infants," replied Sigismund: "let the bombardment instantly cease, and spare all who make no further resistance. The chieftains of the faction shall hereafter meet their punishment."

"For one amongst the number," replied Ferrante, "I stand pledged to secure his safety. Don Paolo Perollo is my prisoner, and has been by me received to quarter."

"And who shall presume," said Luna, "to pardon the murderer of Gilberto? Signor Luchese, the prisoners are mine. The fate of don Paolo is determined, and he shall die, for the vengeance which the fall of don Pietro demands."

"He shall not die, count Luna," answered Luchese undauntedly. "If the other chieftains of your party have lent their aid to accomplish your purpose, as vassals and retainers, Luchese desires to

be considered as an ally and an equal; and before a sword shall be drawn against the person of don Paolo, your arms must be turned against those to whom you owe your victory."

"This insolence, signor Ferrante, is not such as I shall submit to with impunity."

"As you think proper, count Luna," replied Luchese. "I have aided you with no want of spirit, I trust, in destroying one tyrant in Sciacca. It is not my intention to transfer the power, but to extirpate it; at the same time, I wish not to disturb the pleasure of our triumph by any disobedience or schisms in our party, and therefore request, as the reward of my services, your grace for don Paolo."

Somewhat appeased by the apology, and unwilling to provoke a farther contest with Luchese, Sigismund granted his request, though with reluctance and dissatisfaction, and followed to the part of the castle where the ladies were awaiting the termination of the horrors of the siege.

Attended by Ferrante, Infontanetta, and

Talyavia, don Sigismund ascended the staircase; the door was thrown open, and he halted at the portal, struck with the distressing scene before him. The baroness had risen from her knees, and was standing surrounded by her children, supported on one side by don Paolo, and on the other by Marguerita, who had flown to her the instant she heard how it had fallen with the fortunes of Perollo.

Costanza still persisted in remaining at her station, and as her young friend deemed her safety to be secure beyond a doubt, from her connexion with don Sigismund, she hastened to share the fate of her beloved protectress.

The majestic figure of the baroness Pandolfina seemed to have acquired new dignity from her misfortunes; she stood amidst the ruins of her house, as if superior to fate, and commanding the homage of her conquerors. The paleness of her countenance, and the sadness of her brow, alone pointed her out as a sharer in the scenes around her. Her children clung

trembling about her, and the floor, upon the approach of Sigismund, was strewed with prostrate females, whose fate appeared to hang upon his lips. But it was the patient yet dignified sorrow of the baroness which awed and overcame every feeling of enmity to those about her; and as Sigismund gazed in respectful admiration, he felt a tear of sympathy bedew his cheek, and confess the conquest she had gained. He advanced with a salutation as submissive as the Imperial person would have required, and lamented the circumstances by which she was surrounded—"May Heaven," he said, "pardon him who has been the cause of all this ruin! but for yourself, signora, and the ladies by whom you are attended, command my services, and those of all my friends."

The baroness returned her thanks for these expressions of courtesy, and begged permission to withdraw from the scene of havoc, and that the remnant of the followers of Perollo might be spared.

"Your excellenza," answered the count,

"is at liberty to repair to any asylum you may choose, and I have already given orders that when resistance ceases, my soldiers should no longer pursue their enemies. Whither would you wish to be conducted?"

"My kinsman, don Paolo, will have the goodness to escort me to the convent of Santa Martha, with such ladies as may wish to follow me."

"The gentlemen whom the fortune of war has made our captives, I had not intended to include in this capitulation; but for don Paolo, he is the prisoner of Luchese, and to him I have resigned him."

"Here, signor," interrupted Talyavia, "is a wounded kinsman of mine, for whom I must prefer a similar petition to that which has been offered by don Ferrante—the count Sambuca."

"I bear no enmity to the race of Talyavia," answered Sigismund. "The count has chosen his party, and met with all the punishment I can wish: I will not increase the sufferings of his wounds and defeat."

During this time Sigismund had looked anxiously round him for the persons of Costanza di Solanto and her mother—  
“All the ladies in the castle are not assembled here, I think,” he said, turning to the baroness Pandolfina.

“The lady Costanza,” she replied, “remains with the body of her mother in an adjoining chamber. You will allow her, signor, to accompany the corpse of her departed parent to Santa Martha also.”

Luna started at the information, and heard not the petition—“Let me be conducted to her presence.”

The baroness was about to lead the way, when Luna hesitated—“Excuse me, signora,” he said, “if I request some other escort. I will myself conduct the signora di Solanto to a place of security.”

“You will not, I hope, distress the lady Costanza, by opposing her wishes at the present moment, signor, and the treatment I have received at your hands, makes me hope she is also free to choose an asylum.”

"The future bride of Sigismond di Luna can have no asylum so proper as the castle of her affianced husband. Excuse me, lady, upon this head; my resolutions are decisive."

"Allow me," said Marguerita, "to conduct the count."

The baroness saw that opposition was fruitless, and yielded to necessity.

The courts were now filled with the victorious soldiery, and all the authority of their officers was necessary to keep them from penetrating to the apartments of the ladies.

"The sooner you retire the better," said don Paolo, addressing the baroness, "or we may find it difficult to defend you from the lawless rioters."

"I wait only the return of Marguerita," answered the baroness, faintly.

"Commit the signora to my care, madame," said Luchese, "and I will see her in safety to Santa Martha."

"She will be here immediately, I doubt



not, and I cannot leave her, or allow her to be separated from me."

Don Sigismund followed his conductress in silence; his bosom was agitated by the most conflicting passions. His love for Costanza was, if possible, more impetuous, for the restraints which it had met with, and he was now resolved, at all events, to make her his wife; yet he dreaded the spirit he should have to encounter, and the just reproaches which he had prepared himself to receive. But the death of the baroness was an event upon which he had not calculated, and it rendered his task greatly more difficult. Her gentle and complying disposition, the consideration she had always shewn him, the interest she had taken in the union, and the favourable manner in which she had interceded in his behalf, had taught him to consider her as one of his best allies. Now he felt aware that he should have to contend with the spirit of Costanza, uninfluenced by filial tenderness and submis-

sion. He had expected to find the baroness terrified and weak, incapable of resistance, or of even wishing to counteract his plans; but how far the sorrows of her orphan child might reduce her, it was impossible to tell, and this doubt and uncertainty made him look forward to the interview with no little uneasiness.

Marguerita preceded him into the room, and announced the unwelcome visitor. Costanza was kneeling beside the couch upon which reposed the remains of her dead parent, and the confessor had been praying with her. She rose at the entrance of the count, and instinctively seized the cold hand of her mother. Her face was pale, and she looked thin and in ill health from her long confinement, and the sorrow she had experienced; but as the name of her persecutor was announced, a slight suffusion overspread her cheek, and her eyes sparkled with indignant animation.

Sigismund thought she had never looked so lovely, but unable to stand her gaze, his eyes were instantly withdrawn, and

fell on the lifeless body of the devoted Isolanto. There his presence again approached him for the first time to which he had been accessory, and he stood there after Marguerite had announced this.

"Has the destiny of the daughter asked Costanza," come to witness how well his work has been achieved, and to complete the downfall of Solano home by the murder of his orphan child?"

"It is my misfortune still to be misunderstood," replied Sigismund. "my great lady Costanza, is only equalled by your own. I am come to offer every consolation in my power."

"Death, signor, is the only consolation I expect from your hands: the only one which would be welcome now."

"I have been compelled, signora, to vindicate a long-continued trail of insults by the sword; but it is only against my enemies it has been drawn."

"If every insult were to be thus avenged, count Luna would pay dearly for this intrusion. Retire, signor; I have

suffered sufficiently from you. You would not wish to follow up your persecution beyond the grave."

"I am come to protect and conduct you hence, signora."

"Your protection, count Luna, is the last which I either wish or ought to accept, and it is not my intention to quit the remains of my last parent."

She threw herself on the couch beside her mother, and regardless of the presence of Luna, yielded herself up to the agony of grief, and uttered the most passionate expressions of affection and despair.

Sigismund could scarcely support himself at beholding her affliction, and he said, in a subdued and altered tone—"Dearest Costanza! this mansion is now in the hands of my victorious troops, and no longer a proper abode for you, or a secure receptacle for this lost object of your affection; permit me to order it to be conveyed, with every mark of respect, to Luna Castle, and vouchsafe to accompany it yourself, when my mother will endeavour

to replace the loss you have sustained, and I will strive——”

Here Costanza interrupted him by an hysterical sob, and she said—“ Be content with the ruin you have heaped upon me, but do not insult my misery by mentioning the countess Caltabellotta as a substitute for my gentle and angelic mother.”

“ Moderate this excess of passion, my child,” said the confessor ; “ the professions of count Luna promise every consideration to your feelings.”

“ The professions, padre, of count Luna, brought his father’s friend, the ill-fated baron di Solanto, to this devoted city. The professions of count Luna induced Solanto to listen to his offers, and to propose an alliance with his daughter ; the professions of this same count Luna promised to myself love, confidence, devotion, and respect. Mark how these professions were fulfilled : on our first arrival at his castle, this departed saint was subjected to the insults of his unfeeling mother ; my father nearly consigned to slavery by

the violence of Sigismund himself, since which he has torn one parent from me by secret machinations, and hurried another to an untimely grave by open outrage; and would you have me trust the faith of this most faithless one, who has violated every tie of honour, of humanity, of justice, of religion?"

"Hush! hush! dearest Costanza!" exclaimed Marguerita, terrified at her vehemence, and the effect it produced upon the agitated form of Luna, who trembled from the excess of his emotion—"Dear Costanza," continued her friend, "our protectors are no longer able to afford their aid; we must submit to the mercy of count Luna. He has been generous in his conduct to the baroness Pandolfina; he will not be less so to you, and indeed the castle is no longer an asylum for the living or the dead."

"And are you too deceived by the promises of count Luna? Would you, Marguerita, consign me to the care of him who

has made me an orphan, and destroyed those who would have sheltered my defenceless state?"

"Lady, you must be removed from hence. Your friends are detained by your resistance, and exposed to dangers which I cannot avert," said Sigismund.

The count summoned Geronimo Calandrino from the court below, and spoke a few words to him at the doorway, as the baroness approached to seek the cause of Marguerita's delay.

"I am sorry," observed Luna, "that the lady Costanza persists in opposing our desire to remove her; she must be compelled to submission."

The baroness exhorted Costanza not to give way to her feelings, and by a fruitless opposition to what was unavoidable, expose herself to unpleasant consequences.

"What is the mighty will and pleasure of this conqueror, which I am called on to obey?"

"Count Luna wishes to remove you,

my child, to a place of safety, and to convey the remains of the baroness from this scene of desolation."

"I will attend you, my kind friend, wherever you think proper, as soon as the necessary preparations can be made to convey this departed treasure with us."

"The time, signora, will allow of but little preparation, and I must request you to make Luna Castle your abode at present."

"Your power, count Luna," answered Costanza, "I cannot resist; but force alone shall compel me to become your prisoner."

The baroness felt nearly unable to support herself, but made a violent exertion over her own feelings to calm those around her—"My child," she said, "count Luna will be generous, I trust, in conquest—compose yourself;" then turning to the count, she said—"Don Sigismund, the baroness Pandolfina supplicates for Costanza di Solanto; your triumph over the one must be complete, and if you feel for the other as you profess, you cannot



refuse her request. Under the dreadful circumstances that I am, where can I take her that is beyond your influence? We ask but for the privacy and protection of a convent. Surely this is not a time to outrage the feelings of this poor orphan, by resistance to so natural a wish. Can you tear a child from her last sad duties to her mother's remains? Suffer her to go with me to Santa Martha; you may take any measures you choose to prevent her departure from thence. At any other time than this, she will be more fit to hear you; and considering all circumstances, you cannot wonder at the irritation of her mind at present. Let her depart."

Luna had listened with impatience to the baroness, and he interrupted her by saying—"The wife of Giacomo Perollo may thank her husband's presumptuous folly for these 'present circumstances;' but to her my word is given—she may depart. From you, signora Costanza, I

had expected different conduct; you might have learned ere now that Sigismund di Luna is not to be braved with impunity; your present anxiety to remain with my enemies shews me, more forcibly than ever, the necessity of removing you from such influence. No power on earth shall induce me to let you stay another hour out of my own walls. Here is my particular friend the baron Adriano; he will do me the favour to be your escort, since I cannot at present quit this place; these precious remains shall follow you instantly."

"I have not to be taught," replied Costanza, "the unfeeling tyranny of count Luna; or if I had, his present conduct would have been sufficient. He may, however, yet have to learn, that even a female may defy his threats, resist his violence, and triumph over his oppression; and when again he numbers over his enemies, Costanza di Solanto begs to rank first upon the list. To those who succoured and protected her, as long as courage could

strive against overpowering numbers, her love and gratitude will be as indelible as her hatred to the detested and disgraced name of Luna."

She fell upon her knees as Adriano entered the room, and embracing the body of her mother, wept for a few moments in silence. Then raising her head, she continued—"Farewell, dear relics of my mother! Heaven has in mercy taken you from this scene of trial and affliction: may that mercy still be continued to your orphan, and the justice of the Omnipotent be reserved for your destroyers!"

She threw herself upon the neck of the baroness Pandolfina, tenderly embraced Marguerita, and advancing to Luna, said—"Your captive, signor, waits to be conducted to her prison."

Luna repressed his anger, and turning to Adriano, said—"Let every respect and honour be shewn to the lady Costanza, and immediate preparation made to remove the baroness Solanto, with all the

ceremonials of rank which the time will permit."

Adriano offered to conduct her from the apartment; but she rejected his assistance, and wrapping her veil around her, followed him to the court below, where a litter was in waiting, in which she was immediately placed, and conveyed to Luna Castle. With a respectful salutation to the baroness, Sigismund followed the signora di Solanto to the court. The former gave one melancholy farewell to her departed friend, and yielded to the repeated exhortations of don Paolo and Luchese to retire to the convent. Don Ferrante stationed a guard at the door of the apartment, to prevent any intrusion until the body was removed.

Driven from her ruined home, her husband a fugitive, perhaps a captive in the hands of his remorseless enemies, or even a victim to their sanguinary rage, the unfortunate wife of Perollo still lingered with an aching heart, and unwillingly

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abandoned the abode of many years of happiness and peace.

Talyavia had waited to lend his aid in escorting the ladies through the dangers to which they were exposed.

Don Paolo, to whom every avenue and passage in the castle was well known, conducted the sorrowing party through the interior apartments of the eastern wing, towards the gate which opened from thence into the valley Degli Giumari, in order to avoid the dreadful scenes of havoc and desolation exhibited throughout the courts, and also as the nearest way to the convent, which was situated without the Porta Degli Bagni. Talyavia preceded them a little, to remove any obstacle which might impede their progress, or give an unnecessary shock to the feelings of the baroness, and they quitted the castle without impediment.

Don Paolo had watched with anxious care every thing which passed around, to ascertain, if possible, the fate of his friend and friendess; and as no tidings of his

death or capture had yet reached him, he hoped he had succeeded in making his escape, and at every opportunity, when unobserved, he endeavoured to cheer the baroness with the hope of his eventual safety.

At the convent they were received with every kindness which compassion and respect could devise, and the security of her children being effected, the anxiety of the mother gave way to the affection of the wife, and every thought was centered in her intense impatience to learn the fate of Pandolfina.

On returning to the court, count Luna had instantly demanded to whom the rewards he had promised for the apprehension of Perollo were due; but no one could give him intelligence of the death or capture of the baron. Since he had fired from the northern turret upon the first assailants who had entered the court, no one had seen or heard of him.

The rage of Luna, which had been in no small degree excited by the conduct of

Costanza, but which had been restrained while she was present, from the fear of increasing her dislike, now burst forth with redoubled violence. He stamped upon the ground, raved at his ill fortune, abused his friends as slack in their exertions in his cause, and protested that nothing yet had been done, if his detested enemy had escaped from his revenge.—“ We have battered down his walls, and driven out his wife and children, but the pusillanimous compassion of some has saved the secondary objects of my hatred, and Giacomo Perollo still lives to restore his fallen fortunes, and crush the house of Luna è Peralta by his reviving power. Your avarice,” he cried to Calandrino, who was loaded with spoil, “ and the disgraceful cupidity of others like yourself, have been employed in seizing the riches of the foe, whilst he himself has escaped our hands, and laughed at our lost labours.”

Mateo Benfari was brought before him in bonds, when his savage commands were

to mutilate the wretched captive and dismiss him. He fell at the feet of his inhuman conqueror, but pleaded in vain, and the barbarous sentence was executed upon the spot.

Whilst Sigismund was thus raving at his party, and gratifying his blood-thirsty hatred upon his enemies, the gates of the castle had all been levelled with the ground, some of the buildings were in flames, and the whole a scene of ruin and desolation.

Upon descending with Carusello from the window, don Giacomo had taken his course as far as possible from the principal streets, and encountered with Luca Parisi, one of the inferior magistrates of the city, to whom he had always been a firm and useful friend. Parisi beheld with melancholy regret the altered state of the fugitive chief; haggard, and worn with toil and anxiety, the joy and cheerfulness which had been wont to sparkle in the eyes of Perollo were fled; but a firm and heroic resolution had given an air of dig-



nity and grandeur to his countenance, which shewed him still unsubdued in mind, though in a state almost to excuse despair. The emotion of Parisi for an instant impeded his utterance. At length he said—"Signor, accept such services as respect and gratitude can offer. Commit yourself to me, and if we reach my house unseen, your safety may, I trust, be secured."

"Thanks to you, my friend," answered Pandolfina; "but I would not willingly involve you in my disasters."

"I shall gladly encounter any danger for so kind a benefactor, so respected a friend," replied Parisi.

"Lead on then," said don Giacomo; "our only hopes depend on expedition and secrecy; whilst my enemies are employed in plundering and destroying, we may perhaps reach some asylum unobserved."

The streets had during the late disturbances been deserted by all peaceful citizens, who dreaded the lawless violence of the partisans of Luna; and the insurgents

were now completely occupied in the spoil and plunder of the castle. The fugitives succeeded in passing some way unobserved, and were nearly arrived at the Porta di St. Ermo, where the residence of Parisi was situated, when they met at an angle of the street Antonello di Palermo, who had once been a retainer of the count Sambuca, and dismissed from his service.

“The holy saints be for ever blessed, who have preserved your excellenza from your enemies!” he exclaimed.

Don Giacomo thrust his hand into his purse, and giving the man a handful of gold crowns, promised him that his secrecy and good wishes should hereafter be remembered and rewarded. He was profuse in his thanks and professions, which, however, time would not suffer Perollo to listen to; and he hastened to the abode of his guide and protector, where they arrived without meeting with any one beside.

The family of Parisi was small, and

consisted only of himself, his wife, and one servant, who fortunately was now from home. Madame Parisi cheerfully undertook to run all hazards in protecting their illustrious guest, and observing the fatigue and faintness which both he and his attendant appeared to suffer, instantly fetched some wine for their relief, which considerably revived them, as they had both suffered severely from thirst, caused by their violent exertion and labour. Their kind host instantly prepared for their concealment, placing them in an interior apartment, frequented only by his wife and himself; and here Perollo requested to be left with Carusello, in order to compose himself, recover his strength, and deliberate on the steps it was necessary to pursue to provide for his future safety.

The promises made by Antonello di Palermo were of no avail to secure his faith. He watched Perollo to his retreat, unobserved either by him or Parisi, and had no sooner seen him enter the house, than he hastened with all possible speed

to the castle, where count Luna was still raging at his followers for suffering his arch enemy to escape, and promising rewards of unbounded value to any one who would still secure him; in consequence of which, many of his partisans had left the plunder of the castle, and dispersed themselves in various directions, hoping to intercept the flight of its lord, when the treacherous spy approached.—“Count Luna,” he said, “I claim the fulfilment of your promises, and will shew you the hare upon her form.”

“My gallant fellow,” exclaimed Luna, exultingly, “put Perollo into my hands, and more than I have promised shall be yours. Loria,” he continued, turning to Erasmo, “select an hundred of our followers; attend this guide to the hiding-place of Giacomo, and bring him instantly before me.”

Loria collected the men with some difficulty, and proceeded with Antonello towards the gate of St. Ermo. The house of Parisi was surrounded by guards, and

the orders of Loria given to force the doors, which instantly was done.

The noise roused Pandolfina from his resting-place. He started up, and exclaimed to Carusello that they were discovered. —“ My faithful friend,” he said, “ your services can be of no farther use; I will neither involve you nor my friendly host in my misfortunes; and it is my positive command that you remain where you are.”

Andrea fell at his feet, and embracing his knees, conjured to be allowed to follow him. Parisi came in terrified at the danger of his guest.

“ Their numbers,” he said, “ are overpowering, signor, but I am willing to die in your defence.”

“ Resistance,” said Perollo, “ is useless; you have done all in your power, Parisi; and farther I cannot allow you to expose yourself. I will surrender to the officer who commands the troop.”

Andrea, in an agony of grief, implored his master to defend himself, and allow

him to perish in his service; but the resolution of the baron was inflexible.

“When they have possessed themselves of my person, they will seek no further, and my friends may hope to escape. Andrea, the baroness and my children will still require your life. Preserve yourself for them. Commend me to my wife, to Federico, and my other children. My thanks and blessing be upon all my friends!”

The old man still clung about him, and the tears of Parisi and his wife bore witness to their sorrow.

Perollo, with a countenance unmoved even in this extremity of his misfortunes, again bade them farewell, committed Carusello to their care, and advancing to the door, met Loria, who was entering. Perollo resigned his sword.—“I am happy,” he said, “in meeting a cavalier like don Erasmo Loria to surrender to; and request he will conduct me to the presence of count Luna.”

Don Erasmo received the submission of

his captive with respect and compassion, and begged that he would command his services and friendly exertions; taking his prisoner by the hand, he then conducted him out, and surrounding him by the guard, proceeded towards Luna Castle.

At the instant they were departing, a cry of wild despair was heard, and Andrea rushed out in search of his master. He saw him surrounded by his enemies, and without a prospect of escape; then gazed for an instant on those about him, and perceiving the exulting looks of Antonello, the fatal truth burst upon his mind, that in him he saw the betrayer of his lord. With the speed of youth, and an energy given by despair, he ran furiously upon the traitor, and with one blow dispatched him. The soldiers of Loria were about to revenge his fall by the instantaneous sacrifice of Carusello.

"Save him!" cried Perollo; "it is my old and faithful friend distracted by our loss! save him, don Erasmo, I beseech you."

"His blow was well and justly aimed,"

said Loria; "I will do my best to preserve him. Secure his person," he continued to the soldiers, "and convey him to my quarters."

Perollo took from his neck a chain of great value, and entreated don Erasmo to receive it as a pledge of gratitude for his kindness.

In their way to the Castel di Luna, they were met by Giovanni la Liparia, a Trapanese of low birth, who having been detected by Perollo in several disgraceful and illegal proceedings in an office which he held from the viceroy, had been dismissed from his situation, and consequently became one of his most inveterate enemies.

When he saw the captive chief surrounded by his guards, he shouted with insulting delight, and forcing himself towards Perollo, requested to speak to don Erasmo. Loria commanded him to defer his communication, but he persisted in making his way through the soldiers, who knowing him to be of their party, per-



mitted him to pass. Loria demanded his purpose.

"To have a nearer view," he exclaimed, "of this humbled culprit, who will to-day pay the debt which he owes to the world for his iniquitous tyranny and oppression."

"Silence! dishonest low-born villain," said Perollo; "the fate of Pandolfina depends not on such menial slaves; retire, and provoke not the anger of your superiors."

Though a captive, defenceless and unarmed, there was a native air of dignity and command in the manner of Perollo, which the Frapanese had not the power to resist. Loria was more indignant than don Giacomo himself at the insult which had been offered to a prisoner under his conduct and protection, and he ordered the fellow to retire, under pain of immediate punishment. With looks of subdued but vindictive fury at both cavaliers, La Liparia withdrew, and after deliberating an instant with himself, flew to seek

Calogero Calandrino or the baron Adriano, to whom he had particularly attached himself, and who had brought him forward as one of the party of don Sigismund.

Amongst the most vehement of the persecutors of don Giacomo, stood the family of Calandrino; and during the siege, the two brothers, who were considered as the heads of the house, Geronimo and Calogero, had distinguished themselves by several acts of sanguinary cruelty, which shewed the deep-rooted and inveterate hatred they bore to the name of Perollo. In the debate upon accepting terms from the baron, they had both argued warmly against all compromise or treaty.

After the capture of the castle, Geronimo had wantonly bombarded the building into which the females and children had retired, and received the orders of don Sigismund to desist with much dissatisfaction and murmuring.

The dispositions of both the brothers were equally sanguinary. They had formerly been subject to punishment for

cruelty and oppression, and seemed only to live for vengeance. In the character of the younger of the two, Calogero, avarice was a passion exceeded only by his inhuman barbarity. He had no sooner gained the interior of the Casa di Perollo, than his attentions were directed to unite plunder and assassination; and both his ruling passions seemed likely to be gratified. A confidential attendant of the baroness, who had been separated from her mistress by some accident during her flight, was seized by the murderous Calogero, and regardless of her sex or her prayers, he was about to dispatch her, when she offered, if her life was spared, to conduct him to a secret deposit of some of the treasures of Perollo. The uplifted sword of the barbarian was arrested, and he desired instant proof of her power and inclination to purchase her preservation. She conducted him without loss of time to a cistern in the interior court, in which he soon ascertained that a prize of no small value was contained.

"Know you of any other depository of this sort?"

"No, signor," replied the trembling female; "the chief part of the baron's money and jewels, I believe, is here."

Calandrino deliberated but an instant, and then added the unfortunate informant to the number of victims he that day butchered. The avarice of Calandrino was now gratified beyond his highest expectations, and he lost no time in securing his acquisition, which he caused his own vassals instantly to remove to his residence; and he had just seen it securely lodged, when La Liparia appeared, breathless from the impatience with which he had hastened in search of him.

"What important intelligence, Giovanni, brings you here in such a hurry?"

"Giacomo is taken," he replied; "I have seen him in the hands of our troops; but unless some method is devised of doing ourselves justice before he comes into the presence of count Luna, I fear we shall be deprived of our revenge."

Erasmus Loria, in whose hands the prisoner now is, seems more inclined to fight his battles than to conduct him to execution. Luchese and several of the other chiefs will, I know, be clamorous to dismiss him uninjured; and I doubt the resolution of don Sigismund to resist their united importunities: but tell me, signor, where is Adriano?"

"With the count and my brother Gerónimo still in the castle."

"Decision and expedition only can prevent the mischief I apprehend," said La Liparia.

Calandrino contemplated the escape of Perollo and the probable consequences; the punishment to which he would bring all his enemies; and the restoration he should have to make of his ill-gotten wealth: he commanded La Liparia and his own retainers instantly to follow him, and hastened towards the Castel di Luna.

On the way thither he met with Onofrio Imbiagna, and several other partisans of Luna, whom he desired to attend him.

to the castle, where Erasmo was nearly arrived with his prisoner. Without suspicion of his purpose, he saw Calandrino following him with great impetuosity, and was just assuring Pandolfina of all his interest with count Luna to accommodate matters honourably to both parties, when the villain Calogero ran up, and buried his sword in the back of his unarmed victim ! As Perollo fell, the weapons of Imbiagnia, Liparia, and most of the party present, were sheathed in his body ; and he expired beneath the innumerable blows of his infuriated murderers, near the fountain of San Martino, opposite the gates of Luna Castle.

The sword of Loria was not drawn in vain to revenge the fall of his ill-fated captive. Calandrino received a deep wound, and La Liparia was felled to the ground ; but don Erasmo was soon disarmed, and his reproaches and remonstrances regarded with inattention or contempt. He had engaged his word to protect Perollo till he had brought him to

the presence of count Luna, and therefore considered himself bound to defend him; but his single exertions were soon overpowered, and the body of Perollo was left defenceless in the hands of the murderers, who wreaked their fury on his lifeless remains, with a barbarity as disgraceful to themselves as it was harmless to their victim.

CHAPTER VI.  
~~~~~*Seneca.*—Signor del mondo a te che manta?*Nervuz.*—Pace.

ALFIERI.

CALANDRINO and his associates had scarcely completed their atrocious act, when Sigismund rode up with impatient speed, to receive his prisoner from the hands of don Erasmo; the crowd made way before him, and exposed the mangled form of Pandolfina weltering in his blood. He threw himself from his horse, and contemplated for some moments in silent delight the dreadful spectacle; at length exclaiming—"Thus perish all the enemies of our house! Destruction to Perollo! Liberty to Sciacca, and long life to the emperor!"

His partisans, who now crowded around the scene, rent the air with acclamations. "Viva Luna è Peralta! viva l'Imperadore!"



*è morano i nostri nemici!*" rung throughout the city. Inebriated with their triumph, the soldiers and vassals of the victorious chieftains scattered themselves through every part of the town, and soon told the melancholy tale of the fall of the brave and ill-fated Perollo.

The ruffians who remained with Sigismund about the body, encouraged by the approbation with which the bloody deed had been received by him, resolved on gratifying to the utmost their vengeance against the lifeless object of their hatred. A cord was tied round the body, and fastened to a horse, upon which one of the adherents of Calandrino being mounted, they proceeded to drag the mutilated remains through the streets, whilst count Luna, who encouraged this act of savage barbarity, remounted his charger to follow the disgraceful procession.

Ferrante Luchese arrived as they were setting forth, and beholding the conduct of his party, indignantly seized the bridle of don Sigismund, and besought him, that

if neither the common feelings of humanity, nor regard for his own character, could stop this shameful act, that he would consider the infamy it must affix upon all his family and connexions.

“ I want no advice from Ferrante Luchese to teach me what is due to the friends of count Luna,” replied Sigismund ; “ he has already snatched from my just revenge the murderer of Gilberto, and the destroyer of half my people. Proceed, my brave fellows,” he continued to his soldiers, “ and shew to the citizens of Sciacca how Sigismund di Luna punishes their tyrant and oppressor.”

Luchese tore from his shoulder the badges of his party, and trampled them beneath his feet.—“ The lowest citizen in Sciacca,” he exclaimed, “ will now learn to despise the dishonoured name of Luna, and not a man amongst them but would prefer the situation of the brave Pandolfina to that of his vindictive disgraceful butchers.”

The trumpets and drums of the party,

the shouts and cries of the soldiers and vassals, drowned the farther reproaches and remonstrances of Luchese, and he retired in silence to seek don Paolo, and vent his rage in declaiming against those with whom he had leagued himself.

Don Sigismund was now surrounded by those who, like himself, had given up every regard to their own honour and reputation for the gratification of their impotent revenge. Geronimo and Calogero Calandrino, Onofrio Imbiagnia, and his brother, the malignant Adriano, and Del Nadore, formerly the flatterer of Perollo, and the object of his bounty, now amongst the most vehement of his insulting foes—all these now crowded round their chieftain, who, in complete armour, except his helmet, and with a naked sword in his hand, immediately followed the body of Perollo as it was drawn through the streets of Sciacca. But even in this hour of triumph the pride of Luna received a severe and grating wound; the citizens who met the procession fled with horror in

every direction, whilst the females who beheld the sad spectacle from the windows, bewailed with loud and piercing exclamations the loss of their father and benefactor. Many of the lower class, tearing their hair, and imprecating curses upon the murderers, rushed out into the street, and followed Sigismund with every species of opprobrious abuse, in defiance of the ill treatment they met with from his adherents. The praises of his rival, low as he now was laid, were to Luna proofs of the indelible affection his generous liberality had purchased, and conveyed more bitter pangs to his heart than had the greatest display of power and pomp which had ever been exhibited by Perollo in his days of joy and splendour.

When the party arrived opposite the house of Imbiagnia, where the wounded Della Bardia still lingered in a hopeless and dying state, the recollection of his fate roused the assassins to another ebullition of fury, and they redoubled their cries of triumph and revenge. The coun-

tess Caltabellotta had not quitted the house since her first arrival, but watched every turn of Della Bardia's changing countenance. For hours he had appeared not to remark her presence. Again she thought that at times he recognised her, when she would throw herself beside his couch in agony, imploring him by some means to relieve her anxiety respecting the depository of her secret. But he paid little attention to her supplications. Every exertion brought on a new convulsion, and except at the approach of don Sigismund, or count Giorgio, he gave no signs of being interested by those about him; for some time previous to the murder of Perollo, he had lain in a quiescent state, gradually growing weaker. The countess had dreaded every instant would bring on the termination of his existence, and had been revolving within herself the means of discovering the secret so important to her future comfort and security. To seize the person of count Giorgio, the friend and confidant of Accursi, was the only

plan she had yet devised, and was fully resolved that the death of Della Bardia should be the signal for the Greek's destruction.

As the sound of the approaching cavalcade reached her ears, she rose from her seat to observe the cause; an attendant entered, and informed her that the conquerors were dragging the body of Perollo in triumph through the city; the lady threw open the lattice to feast her eyes upon the shameful spectacle, and could not restrain her exclamations of delight when the mangled form appeared in view. Wrapt in exultation, she forgot for an instant all her anxiety respecting Della Bardia, and contemplated with barbarous pride the disgraceful vengeance of the friends of Luna and Peralta.

When the shouts of the party rose beneath the windows, she was advancing into the balcony, but felt her arm grasped violently by some one behind her. She turned and saw the ghastly form of Della Bardia standing erect upon the couch, his eyes

flashing with demoniacal expression, and all his features terrifically distorted. She stood transfixed in horror and amazement. The eyes of the wounded man caught a momentary view of his destroyer. With a tremendous voice he shouted out—"Io moro contento! io moro felice!" and fell a lifeless corpse at the feet of the countess and her attendant. They attempted in vain to raise the fallen form of Della Bardia; its gigantic and stiffening weight resisted all their efforts; and the lady having ascertained that death had terminated her hopes of making any discovery, prepared to return to Luna Castle, still tormented with the uncertainty of what might be the result of those threats which alone had saved Accursi d'Amato from the poniard of a secret assassin.

In the meanwhile Sigismund and his companions held on their way, unconscious of the event which had taken place, and it was nearly sunset when the barbarous procession closed before the gates of Francisco Perollo, the captain of the city, who

was absent at Partanna, raising troops, it was supposed, to aid his murdered kinsman. Here the mangled body of Pandolfina was left, covered with blood and dust, and so deformed and disfigured by the treatment it had received, as to render it impossible to be recognized even by his dearest friends. He who but a few days back had been surrounded by every domestic blessing, by numerous gallant friends and retainers, whose will and whose word were law throughout the country, who was followed by the blessings of the poor, by the respect of thousands, and the envy of now a few, was not left without a friend to save his mangled body from insult and indignity, or to remove it from the spot where his enemies had cast it forth, when sated with their inhuman revenge.

To have been enrolled amongst the friends of don Giacomo Perollo, was but a short period before the ambition of his equals, the fortune of his inferiors; now his very name was the signal for perse-



cution. The dearest objects of his love were mourners and fugitives, indebted for their existence to the murderer of the husband and the parent; his faithful followers buried beneath the ruins of his splendid abode, or escaped wounded and spoiled, reduced to misery and want.

Nor was the situation of the victor more to be envied. Don Sigismund had now obtained a full and complete revenge. The power of Perollo was apparently annihilated, the house of Luna triumphant, and all their injuries and insults, real or imaginary, fully and amply repaid. The daughter of Solanto was completely in his power, deprived of every friend who might support or encourage her in resisting his will and pleasure. Every thing had yielded before him, and of all his purposes, not one had failed in being accomplished, even beyond his most sanguine expectations. Yet even in the moment which completed his triumph, and crowned him with victory, he was an object of greater compassion than the most

miserable of those from whom he had torn every earthly happiness. The lamentations and the praises he had heard lavished upon the fallen Perollo, and the curses poured forth against his destroyers, had checked his enjoyment even at the instant of gratification ; and his sanguinary hatred now gorged to its utmost, his thoughts necessarily wandered from the present to the future ; the lives and fortunes of his house, of all his friends and adherents, were justly forfeited to the outraged laws of humanity and justice. The vengeance of Monteleone would be swift to punish the murder of his friend ; and to resist the viceregal forces, was a task he could not expect to accomplish. The emperor was known to be inflexibly just, and to punish without mercy all insults offered to the sovereign authorities and to the laws of the realm, and the massacre of Statella would alone have been an unpardonable crime. On the other hand, the interest which Luna had with Pope Clement, and in which he trusted to make his peace,

might possibly be dilatory, at all events could not be exerted before the viceroy had an opportunity of trying his strength, and perhaps of completing his final ruin; he had been abandoned and insulted by several of his party, who stood highest in reputation for gallantry and honour. Pu-giades, Luchese, and Erasmo Loria, had forsaken him with reproaches and contempt; Talyavia had left him in silent indignation; and his own heart secretly whispered that he was dishonoured and disgraced, though even to himself he would neither have allowed or acknowledged it. Many of his bravest troops had fallen in the siege. Gilberto had long been a firm and faithful friend, and Della Bardia, with all his faults, was a zealous and devoted partisan. On the subject of Costanza di Solanto, the mind of Sigismund was even more disturbed; his love had increased by the obstacles thrown in his way, and the sight of her, even in sorrow, illness, and in anger, had blown the flame, till he felt that it would be impossible for him to

live without her; yet the spirit she had manifested upon every occasion, promised a resistance he dreaded to encounter, and the abhorrence she had expressed against himself, augured but ill for his prospect of inducing her to accept him, by the gentler means of persuasion and affection.

Arrived at Luna Castle, he learned from his mother the conclusion of Della Bardia's sufferings; and after some debate upon the necessary steps to be taken with regard to Francisca, whom he resolved to commit solely to the guidance of his mother, the count enjoined her to use every possible means of soothing the lady Costanza, and to see that all the respect due to the memory of the baroness was scrupulously attended to. The body had been removed from the Casa di Perollo, and Costanza again allowed to attend upon it.

Don Sigismund then proceeded to hold a consultation with Adriano and his remaining friends, upon the necessary steps to be adopted to secure themselves against the viceroy, and the machinations of the

scattered friends and adherents, of Perollo, who were still numerous, and might, if united, become powerful.

Several of the chiefs of the insurgents continued during the night their devastation and plunder within the walls of the Casa di Perollo, whilst others were employed in perpetrating various schemes of petty malignity against the vanquished. Simme Maurici, with a numerous company, paraded the streets, defacing the insignia of the Perollo family from every public building which their munificence had embellished; and so great had been their power, so princely their liberality, that few of the principal ornaments of Sciacca but exhibited the emblems of their illustrious house; in every place where these appeared, Maurici and his band, with the minutest care, endeavoured to efface them.

Another act, the memory of which will endure as long as the names of Luna and Perollo are remembered in Sciacca, is recorded of Pietro Imbiagnia, equally disgraceful to himself and his friends. In a

garden beyond the city walls, belonging to one of the poorer citizens, was a pear tree, the fruit of which had long been celebrated for its flavour and perfection; and the possessor of this garden having, in common with most of his class, a grateful sense of the kindness and protection of Perollo, was annually accustomed to present him with an offering of the fruits of this celebrated tree, which, in honour of his favourite chief, was called "l'albero Perollo:" to this garden Imbiagnia, and a large concourse of the followers of Luna, took their way, early on the morning after the death of Pandolfina; when not contented with cutting down the tree, they burnt and destroyed its roots, that no shoot might afterwards arise from the stock, to recall the memory of the name which they abhorred. The tree itself they then bore in triumph to the city, shouting through the streets, "Let us not leave a scion of Perollo!" which has since become a proverb in the neighbourhood of

Sciacca, to signify the extreme of vengeance and extermination.

When don Sigismund and his friends were assembling in council, they were interrupted by the arrival of a deputation from the monks of the Carmelite convent, to beg his permission for the interment of the body of Statella and his unfortunate companions, who still remained without the rites of sepulture. To this don Sigismund consented, desiring the body of the commander to be buried in the sepulchre of don Geronimo Leggio, formerly captain of the city, who had been punished with death for treasons discovered through the activity and exertions of Pandolfina. The situation in which the remains of Perollo had been abandoned, was at that time unknown to the monks, who retired as soon as their request was granted.

The intelligence of the murder of don Giacomo had been conveyed by Luchese to don Paolo, who, after seeing the baroness and her companions in safety to the

convent, had retired to the residence of his brave preserver; he now received the information with firmness, and without any observation on the conduct of the assassins; but when he reflected upon the widow and the orphans to whom the fatal event must be communicated, his resolution forsook him, and he gave way to the feelings with which he was oppressed.

Luchese, with as little detail as possible, mentioned the unworthy treatment which was about to be inflicted upon the body, and entreated don Paolo, if possible, to save the baroness from hearing of this outrage. Perollo heard with indignation the barbarous proceedings of the enemy, and agreed with Ferrante in the necessity of apprising the ladies of their loss, and preventing, if possible, any of the particulars from being known.

Luchese offered to attend him to the convent, to save him from the injuries and insults of the partisans of Luna.

As they proceeded on their melancholy embassy, the distant shouts of the in-



human triumph reached their ears; don Paolo trembled violently; Luchese supported him, and loudly exclaimed against himself for having ever joined with so disgraceful a banditti, and lent his aid in furthering so iniquitous an end; from henceforth vowing to renounce all intercourse and communication with the house of Luna, and with every one who had participated in the shameful scenes which disgraced their victory.

They reached the convent, which was without the walls, unmolested and unseen, and were immediately conducted to the baroness, who anxiously awaited intelligence of her lord and husband. The countenance of don Paolo was the herald of his tidings. Luchese had remained without, not to intrude upon the afflicted family; and as the messenger of new misfortunes entered the apartment, his pale countenance and altered eye, his quivering lip, and the hesitation of his manner, too clearly told his tale.

“My children are fatherless, and my-

self a widow !" exclaimed the baroness, in a tremulous tone.

Don Paolo stood silent and incapable of utterance, and the wife of Pandolfina sank lifeless at his feet. The children screamed in agony. Marguerita attempted to raise her fallen protectress, and exerting all the power she possessed over her own feelings, endeavoured to quiet the lamentations of the young ones, who clung round their mother with loud and bitter cries of grief and terror. Don Paolo appeared bereft of all his powers ; he could neither act nor speak, and catching the youngest child in his arms, wept over it with unrestrained and inexpressible agony. The entreaties and exhortations of Marguerita roused him at length, and he tried to follow her example, and endeavour to recover the baroness, who remained for some time relieved by insensibility from the misery to which she was destined to awake ; at length she slowly unclosed her eyes to returning sense and wretchedness.

Her first request was to be taken immediately to the body of her husband.

Don Paolo represented the impossibility of any of their party adventuring themselves amongst their enemies during the first effusion of their violence.—“ Tomorrow,” he said, “ Luchese shall demand the restitution of their victim, who shall instantly be removed hither.”

The night was passed by the afflicted family of Perollo in deep and bitter lamentations, and don Paolo requested Luchese to apply for the restoration of the body, who not supposing that the barbarity of count Luna would extend beyond the first ebullition of his frenzy, had desired his brother, don Marco, to make the demand, which was rejected by the count with the most unfeeling and decided resolution.

To attempt to remove it without his permission, was impossible, his adherents being entirely masters of the city, and scattered through it in every direction. Upon the fall of Perollo, their numbers

had been increased by all the idle and ill-disposed persons in the town and neighbourhood, who flocked eagerly to the standard of don Sigismund, in the hopes of sharing in the enormous plunder; an hundred thousand florins having been seized in the Casa di Perollo, and it being expected that the rage of Luna would next be directed against other members of the family of Pandolfina, who must undoubtedly fall easier victims than their chief. Collecting round him a numerous body of men, was considered by the count as likely to overawe the viceroy, and to secure more advantageous terms; on which account he encouraged all who chose to enrol themselves amongst his adherents.

The refusal of interment to the body of don Giacomo was communicated by Luchese to Perollo, with every expression of indignation and disgust at such conduct, and with an offer of his services in any way to accomplish the undertaking secretly, or to attempt, by remonstrating

with the more honourable members of the faction, to induce them to compel their chief to grant the desired permission.

Don Paolo received the intelligence with horror and regret, and requested a short time for deliberation before he determined how to act. In the meanwhile he was obliged to revisit the convent of Santa Martha, having promised the baroness to be absent but a short time.

Upon his arrival, he found that she had sunk for a few minutes into a disturbed state of slumber, and Marguerita appeared to request he would remain, as she was aware that her protectress would inquire, the instant she awoke, for her kind friend, and be distressed at his absence.

Don Paolo willingly consented to stay, and Marguerita anxiously inquired when the body of her second parent would be restored. Perollo could scarcely articulate the refusal which had been made to their demand; his companion asked by whom the request had been preferred?

"By don Marco Luchese," replied don Paolo.

"It is impossible," said the lady, "but that a few hours reflection, and the remonstrances of his friends, will bring count Luna to a just sense of his wanton inhumanity."

"Those by whom he is surrounded are equally strangers to every feeling of honour and charity," said Perollo, despairingly.

The orphan of Landolini remained a few moments silent, as if deliberating with herself.

"Allow me, signor," at length she said, with some hesitation, "to undertake the task of inducing count Luna to grant our petition."

Perollo looked in wonder at his young companion, and shook his head in despair. —"I possess no powers of oratory, signor, nor perhaps any persuasive arguments, but I think I can rely upon my perseverance in the cause; and from the conduct of the

count when he granted us permission to withdraw from the Casa di Perollo, he cannot be totally devoid of humanity, though warped by passion and revenge. For myself, I fear no dangers in the service of the baroness, and devotion to the memory of my murdered parent and protector, will give me resolution to surmount any obstacles which may be thrown in my way. To aid me I shall have every argument which human feeling and Christian charity can give, and to oppose me only a barbarous revenge, which is not always the sole inhabitant of the bosom of count Luna."

Don Paolo knew no other feasible plan, and although the one proposed by Marguerita was not such as to excite any sanguine expectations, he listened to it with attention.

"To expose yourself alone and undefended to the insolence of the brutal ruffians by whom Sigismund is surrounded, cannot be permitted," he said.

"Surely the abbess and some of the sisterhood will lend their aid in accomplishing an act so consonant with the duties of religion; the father Angelini, I know, would attend us: do, signor, permit me to attempt this act of gratitude to the memory of him to whose noble generosity I am so eternally indebted."

"If the lady abbess objects not, my opposition shall give way to your wishes; but let us not distress the baroness, by informing her of the necessity of this measure."

Marguerita withdrew to request the abbess would attend don Paolo, and decide upon the propriety of her request. The venerable superior had long been affectionately attached to the baroness Pandolfina, and her house had experienced the liberality of don Giacomo. She therefore received the helpless fugitives with the tenderest sympathy and consideration; warmly entered into all their sufferings, and shared their grief: with unfeigned abhorrence she now heard the detail of count Luna's conduct, but at the proposal of



Marguerita, she hesitated, terrified at the difficulty, and astonished at the idea of so great a breach of the usual discipline of her order.

The signora Landolini trembled for the fate of her petition, when the father Angelini entered the room ; he had come to visit his patroness in her affliction, and was ignorant of the new distress in which her friends were involved.

To the confessor Marguerita now addressed herself, and to her infinite satisfaction succeeded in engaging him in her cause, which he advocated so successfully as to persuade both the superior and Perollo to compliance, and to aid in furthering her plans. The abbess, from age and infirmity, was unequal to the task of attending her, but did not object to part of the nuns joining in the procession.

Angelini undertook to ensure the attendants of the monks of San Francisco, to which society he belonged, and had no doubt but that the Carmelite brothers

would again assist in so charitable and pious an undertaking. In a few hours he engaged to be in readiness, and requested the permission of the signora to communicate her intentions to some of the principal ladies connected with the family of Perollo, or who favoured his party, and lamented his untimely end, that their company might have every addition which was likely to produce an effect upon the mind of the vindictive Sigismund.

Marguerita willingly consented to leave every thing to the disposal of the confessor, and it having been determined to keep the whole proceeding from the baroness, she withdrew to see if the object of her anxious care was roused from her temporary repose.

When she left the apartment, the abbess remarked to don Paolo her astonishment at the conduct of Marguerita—"Any other girl," she said, "under such circumstances, would have required support, instead of being able to give it; but the signora Landolini seems to acquire cou-

rage and resolution by every fresh difficulty."

"Your observation, signora," said don Paolo, "is perfectly just; but the firmness and steadiness evinced by Marguerita, are no more than might be expected from her education; and, unhappily for her, she has, ere this, had opportunities of shewing the support to be derived from good sense and good principles in the hour of trial."

The baroness was risen from her couch when her adopted child entered the room, and was kneeling before the crucifix in silent prayer. Marguerita joined in her devotion, and when she had risen, inquired tenderly if she felt refreshed by her repose. The mourner was more composed than she had been since the event, affectionately replied to her questions, and asked if don Paolo had yet arrived? Being answered in the affirmative, she prepared to receive him. Their feelings were again violently agitated at meeting, and the ba-

roness could with difficulty ask if any reply had been received from count Luna.

"No final arrangement has yet been made," said Perollo; "as soon as it is, your excellenza shall be informed."

"It will be a melancholy satisfaction to pay the last offices to him we have lost," she said, after some hesitation, finding it impossible to pronounce the name of her murdered lord.

Don Paolo endeavoured to turn her thoughts into another channel, by mentioning a private dispatch he had forwarded during the night to the viceroy, by means of a secret messenger, to communicate the state into which Sciacca had been thrown by the violence of the rebels.

"And Federico," exclaimed the agonized mother, "will then learn the horrors of our situation."

A fresh burst of grief once more impeded all conversation; but after a time, Perollo succeeded in turning her attention to her children, and especially to her absent

son. He then observed that Marguerita had not had any rest, and proposed to remain in her station, if she would retire for an hour or two.

"The dear child," said the baroness, "has had no thoughts but for our afflictions : it will be a comfort to me if she can find repose."

Marguerita understood the purpose of don Paolo in dismissing her, and instantly retired, not to take the rest she so much wanted, but to prepare for her eventful expedition to Luna Castle, and to try the powers of persuasion on the relentless Sigismund.

The confessor, father Angelini, at length arrived to attend the young petitioner; he was accompanied by the monks of his own convent, and was to be joined by the Carmelite brothers; many of the noble ladies in the city he also hoped would attend the procession; and six of the nuns had been engaged in the charitable undertaking.

Marguerita was still attired in the weeds she wore for her father, and her com-

panions, the sisters of Santa Martha, enveloped in the thick black veils of their order, formed a sad and funereal train. Slowly they entered the adjoining gate of the city, and as they held on their way through the streets, several ladies of rank, and females of all classes, joined the lamenting cavalcade. The Carmelites met them near the plain before the castle of count Luna, and the whole assemblage arrived at the gates without meeting with any obstruction.

The prior requested to be conducted to don Sigismund, and all the party were admitted into the great hall, where they awaited his appearance. Marguerita now trembled with agitation, and leaned upon Angelini for support.

At length the count entered: the signora Landolini tried to advance towards him, but her limbs refused their office, and she could only fall at his feet in an agony of tears. The other females followed her example, and for some time their sobs and lamentations were the only sounds heard

throughout the assembly. Luna seemed affected, and stood waiting an explanation of the scene.

The prior of San Francisco stated their request, and demanded permission to remove the body of the baron Pandolfina for the purpose of interment.

Displeased at so public a testimony to the worth of his rival, and indignant at the general commiseration excited by his fate, Sigismund declared that his determination was already taken, and that he had decreed the carcase of the tyrant as a prey to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field.

The prior attempted to remonstrate.

"My resolution is fully fixed," said Luna, in an angry tone; "let any one who dares presume to contradict it."

Marguerita rose from her position, and firmly, but modestly, asked if such was his final answer?

"Yes," he replied, scarcely regarding the questioner.

"Hear me, count Luna," she again began; "for your own sake, allow me a short and patient hearing. I am not about to plead the cause of the victim who is now beyond the reach of human vengeance, insult, or compassion; it is the cause of don Sigismund di Luna, the honour of his house, the reputation of his name, through all succeeding ages, and in every nation where the feelings of humanity are respected and acknowledged. Count Luna, you have deprived me of a father, a benefactor, a protector—you have taken away their support from the widow and the orphan; do not refuse to grant them the only consolation in your power to bestow—the melancholy satisfaction of paying their last duties to the dead. Your own heart, count Luna, would, in its quiet moments of reflection, yield an assent to our petition. Put away for an instant the passions by which your reason is obscured. If there is a person upon earth whose good opinion you value—one for whose approbation you feel a



deep and anxious desire, think what would be their judgment on your present refusal. If you have any respect to the faith of your forefathers—if you have hopes in heaven hereafter, count Luna, revoke your barbarous decree. By the objects dearest to you on earth—by the honour of your name—by every feeling of humanity, and every principle of Christianity, religion, and piety, you are compelled to grant our prayer. Think not that if this poor boon shall be denied, Perollo will want a monument to record his name and memory to succeeding ages; his fame shall flourish, though his ashes are scattered to the winds of heaven; whilst the name of Luna, if stained by this inhuman act, though crowned with victory, supported by unbounded power, and recorded with all the ingenuity of man, shall hereafter for ever be blasted by infamy, and blighted by disgrace.”

The lovely speaker, animated by her subject, and pleading the cause of all who were dearest to her on earth, had forgot-

ten, in her deep interest and anxiety, every fear which at first had overpowered her; her veil was thrown back, and displayed her striking beauty, inspired by the enthusiasm with which she was transported.

Don Sigismund stood speechless in admiration and astonishment; the lamentations of the other females had gradually sunk in wonder, and the whole assembly were fixed in various attitudes of attention, when the voice of Marguerita ceased for an instant. Not a breath disturbed the silence of the hall; the changing manner and softened aspect of the count gave encouragement to the pleading damsel, and after a short pause, she renewed her supplications—"Count Luna, I have received one favour already at your hands; in the moment of triumph, you preserved the life of her who has been more than a mother to the orphan child of Landolini, and your conduct in that hour of distress convinces me that your heart possesses the feelings which I now seek once again to awaken.

You have numbers attached to you by the bonds of affection and of blood ; think what would be their sufferings, could your situation be exchanged for that of him for whom I plead ; you have known the force of human affection, and of love, signor, in the various ties by which they bind us to our kindred. Report speaks loudly of the filial piety of don Sigismund di Luna, and, I doubt not, there are other chains around your heart, which would teach it what our sensations must be in imploring such a mercy as we now seek to obtain. Count Luna, again let me entreat you to revoke your barbarous resolution."

Marguerita was about to kneel a second time, when Sigismund prevented her—" You have prevailed, signora, and upon certain conditions your request is granted."

The lady expressed her thanks, and asked upon what terms he acceded to their petition.

" That the body be removed," he said, " without pomp or ostentation—without

announcing to the citizens the celebration of the obsequies by the clangour of bells, or the parade of crosses and flambeaux; let it be conveyed to its final abode quietly and privately."

Margueritz accepted the concession of Sigismund with additional thanks, and the party withdrew from the castle, for the purpose of conveying the body to the Convent of Santa Martha. A bier was soon procured, and the mourners proceeded to the house of Francisco Perollo, before which it had been left. The mutilated remains were raised from the earth with every mark of respect, whilst the unceasing tears of the attending multitude proclaimed the value of the friend and protector they had lost.

In sad and silent state the procession then took their way to Santa Martha, gaining numbers as they passed along, who all united in testifying their respect to the worth and honour of the departed. More than an hundred of the principal ladies in Smeeth, covered with mourning veils, at-

tended the body to the convent, and when placed in the church, they gave way to the vehemence of their grief in cries and lamentations.

The baroness Pandolina was apprised of the event, and rose instantly to make her way to the place where the remains of her lord were placed, but the representation of her friends induced her still to delay for a short time till the crowd was abated, when every precaution was taken to conceal the outrages which had been committed on the body. A large pall was thrown over it, and every part covered, when don Paolo led the afflicted widow into the church, and earnestly entreated her not to indulge her feelings more than she could avoid. She summoned all her resolution, and conducted herself with the most heroic fortitude: her wish to remain some time with the body was acceded to, and she could only be persuaded to retire when the necessary preparations for the interment began.

On the following evening, the last re-

mains of the illustrious baron Pandolfina were removed to the Carmelite church, with none of the usual appendages of funeral pomp, but followed by the best and noblest of his fellow-citizens, embalmed with their sincere and generous sorrows, hallowed by their prayers, and consecrated by their love.

The monks received the honoured relics at the great gate of the church, and conveyed them to the chapel, in which many of his noble ancestors reposed ; but never had one of their race been consigned to his last abode more sincerely lamented, more ardently beloved, or more devoutly admired, than don Giacomo Perollo.

CHAPTER VII.  
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Oh, Memory ! thou fond deceiver !  
Still importunate and vain ;  
To former joys recurring ever,  
And turning all the past to pain. GOLDSMITH.

THE first messengers who had been sent from Sciacca, unfortunately arrived two days after the viceroy had departed for the continent of Italy : they had followed him into Calabria, and met him on his return, he being ordered back soon after his landing, in consequence of the final conclusion of the negotiations between the emperor and the pope, which had rendered an increase of troops in Italy unnecessary ; whilst the proceedings between Margaret of Austria and Louis of France at Cambray, promised a general termination of hostilities throughout Europe.

Upon his return to Messina, the duca

di Monteleone learned the fatal termination of the struggle which Perollo had made against the insurgents, and the subsequent conduct of the partisans of Luna; his horror and indignation at the barbarous transactions, at the violation of the laws, and the insult offered to the person of the emperor in the murder of don Gerónimo Statella, were increased by the deepest sorrow for his own personal loss, in the death of his faithful friend the baron Pandolfina. But the grief of Federico was beyond all powers of description; and although his own departure from Sciacca had been in obedience to orders he could not resist, and the return of the troops with him an affair in which he had no voice, yet, in the agony of his grief, he reproached himself for having deserted his parents and family when his presence was most necessary.

The viceroy kindly felt for his distress, and assured him that all possible expedition should be used in sending him over to revenge his father's death, to protect his



widowed mother and his persecuted friends, and to inflict the severest punishment upon the rebels. Gaetano also most sincerely sympathized in the calamity of his friend, and from his visit to Sciacca, had acquired an affection for don Giacomo, which made him lament his untimely fall with unfeigned sorrow, independent of his regard for Federico.

A council of state was called as soon as possible, to which were convened all the general officers attached to the army. The viceroy opened the assembly in much agitation, and under much distress, stating that the event which had called them together was such as must fill every loyal subject, every one possessed with the spirit of humanity, with astonishment and horror. He then informed them that count Sigismund di Luna, having collected together eight hundred conspirators, had made himself master of Sciacca, slain don Geronimo Statella, with all his officers, guards, and legal attendants, who had been sent to that city, in order to chastise some previous

outrages which had been committed by some of the friends of count Luna; and that after this massacre, they had besieged the castle of don Giacomo Perollo, baron of Pandolfina, which, after three days fighting, they had taken, and murdered its gallant defender, whose body they had afterwards inhumanly insulted, drawing it through the city at the tail of a horse, and denying to it the rites of sepulture. They had also, he informed them, murdered and cut in pieces the vassals and retainers of the baron, burnt and destroyed his castle, and making themselves masters of the city, committed every species of violence and rapine, not sparing even the sanctity of religion.

Exclusive of the barbarity of these atrocious deeds, they were to consider the treason and the insult offered to the person of the emperor, not to mention himself, and those to whom the powers of government had been delegated; and he called upon them to punish these unheard-of offences in such a way as might vindicate the out-

raged laws of humanity and justice, and be sufficient for ever to deter others from similar crimes.

The assembly were unanimous in expressing their detestation of the offences of count Luna and his adherents, and in advising his highness to dispatch an overwhelming force to crush the insurgents, before they could have time to escape or elude the sword of justice. It was also resolved that Cala Palastra and Giovanni Regnati, two of the principal judges of the kingdom, should be sent to pronounce legal sentence upon the offenders, and with full power to punish all who were concerned in the transaction.

A large body of men, under experienced officers, were instantly ordered to be in readiness to march on the third day, with Gaetano and Federico, whose impatience to reach his mother was such, that he was only restrained from proceeding alone, by a promise which the viceroy had insisted on his making, not to expose his person, by entering Sciacca, until the pub-

lic peace was ensured by the presence of the soldiers.

The state of the city during the days immediately succeeding the death of Perollo, was one of continued discord and disorder. The peaceful citizens were prevented from proceeding in their usual occupations, by the dread of the lawless bands, who were continually plundering and spoiling those whom they considered either as their enemies, or likely to afford a valuable booty.

The course of justice was entirely stopped; the magistrates and principal officers had either fled or joined themselves to the party of count Luna, and there was no power or influence exerted to restrain the outrages of these licentious brigands. In the principal church the sacraments and all religious rites were suspended, part of the troops of the rebels being quartered there and in the open space adjoining, who, regardless of the sacred place, indulged in every excess, and polluted the altars themselves by their drunkenness and debauch-

ery. In these excesses the Greek followers of count Giorgio particularly distinguished themselves, most of them being ruffians stained with every crime, and schismatics from the true faith.

Don Sigismund had endeavoured, by every display of attention and respect to the lady Costanza, to conciliate her, and to recover her good opinion; but she persisted in treating him with open aversion and contempt, and whenever he approached, either received him with silent displeasure or the bitterest reproaches. Every honour which could be paid to the remains of the baroness Solanto had been most carefully shewn, and her body deposited in the church of Santa Maria d'Istria, together with that of Gilberto.

Adriano and the countess continually urged Luna to complete his nuptials without delay, and not to throw away the power which he now held, or, by waiting till the government could proceed to measures of retribution, to permit Costanza to communicate with his enemies, or the sur-

viving members of her family, or to run the hazard of her being rescued from his grasp; but he still hoped that perseverance would disarm her resentment, and that it would be unnecessary to proceed to violent measures, which in the present state of her mind he must have done, and he knew her spirit too well to dare to provoke it to the utmost.

The countess had several times attempted to intrude upon her sorrows with consolation and advice, but her presence always excited such a tempest of indignation and grief, that Luna had requested his mother to indulge the wayward and impetuous disposition of his mistress, under the plea of her violent grief, and the wretchedness which oppressed her, that produced an irritation upon her spirits likely to yield only to time and indulgence. For a few days therefore Costanza was left to the melancholy satisfaction of weeping over the memory of her parents, undisturbed by any intrusion except occasional visits from Luna.

The countess, after the death of Ac-

cursi d'Amato, had resolved to discover, if possible, to what extent his confidence had been placed in count Giorgio, and whether he was the depository of her own secret. On the evening after Accursi's death, she sent to request an interview with the Greek in her own apartment, determining to use all the art she was mistress of to discover how far she was in his power ; and unless she could rescue from him the evidence which Accursi possessed, to remove him speedily from the power of betraying her.

The count was however fully a match for her, both in art and villany, and hoped to obtain an influence over her, equal to that which his deceased friend had possessed, and to use it for the furtherance of his interest, in any way which might most materially promote it.

He was punctual to the appointment of the countess, who received him with every possible mark of distinction and respect, bestowed the greatest encomiums on his conduct during the siege of the Casa di Perollo, and extolled the obligations he

had conferred upon her son and his family.

Her flattery had no effect upon its object, who however replied with many expressions of thanks for the honour and distinction which her approbation conferred.

There was nothing in his manner which gave any indication of his possessing power or influence, if he chose to exert it; nothing which could manifest an acquaintance with her character, or excite the smallest suspicion. He was distantly respectful, and appeared unconscious of any motive which could have induced her to request this interview.

The countess felt rather relieved from her fears, and proceeding with her artful commendations, said, that amongst the many favours for which the house of Luna and Peralta stood indebted to him, were the kind friendship and regard he had always shewn towards their dear kinsman, the barone della Bardia.

She watched the countenance of the Greek as she thus ventured to approach



nearer to the subject she had at heart. It betrayed no expression to alarm her, and she continued the conversation—"His loss has indeed been a severe one to count Luna, but more particularly to myself; we were nearly and intimately connected."

"By the marriage of the lady Francisca?" said count Giorgio.

The lady started, and was silent for a moment. Here was a proof that Accursi had at least communicated part of his secret affairs to his friend.

"You were acquainted, I doubt not, signor, with all the proceedings of our departed relative?"

"Della Bardia concealed nothing from me, I believe," was the reply.

"Indeed!" said the countess, evidently discomposed; but soon recovering, she continued—"As one of his nearest connexions, it will probably be my melancholy duty to arrange his affairs, and I shall feel infinitely obliged by your kind assistance, signor, in making the final disposition of them."

The Greek expressed his sense of the honour conferred upon him by the confidence of the countess.

“Some of the joint inheritance,” she said, “which Accursi and myself received from the elder Luchese still remains, and in consequence of his death, would devolve upon me; but I know no means of bestowing it which will accord with my own sense of your services, signor, and with what perhaps would have been the wish of Della Bardia, as in requesting you would consider it as a legacy to yourself.”

The count, astonished for an instant at this generosity, was eloquent in his thanks, but almost immediately considered that it was, in all probability, intended as a bribe for some services to be hereafter required.

“It will be necessary,” said the countess, with some hesitation, “to procure all the papers and documents my ill-fated kinsman has left. Perhaps, signor, you may have some in your possession which may assist in completing the necessary arrangements, and if you will have the

goodness to transfer them to me, the affairs may all be speedily settled."

"That my friend Della Bardia has left documents in my hands," replied the wily count, "is a fact I am willing to confess to your excellenza; but how far I may be justified in giving them up at present, I know not. Your proposal requires some consideration on my part, and an examination of the papers themselves. As soon as things are in a more quiet state, I will inspect what documents I hold, and give you the necessary information upon the subject,"

He fixed his eye upon the countenance of the lady as he spoke; her colour changed, and she averted her face in confusion. —"It is no matter, signor," she said, with some disorder; "I had hoped to find you more obliging in the business, which would probably have been as much to your own interest as to mine; but I do not apprehend the papers in your possession are of any very great importance."

"From the manner in which they were confided to my charge, I doubt not but they

relate to matters of some import," answered count Giorgio; "but I can report farther upon them after I have inspected them."

"And where are these documents now deposited?"

"They are in perfect safety, signora, and beyond the reach of accidents."

"Are they in your own hands?"

"They are not with me in Sciacca."

The countess was fearful of betraying too great an interest in the affair, yet her anxiety to ascertain the extent of her danger made her still continue her inquiries.

"You are not aware then of the contents of these documents, signor?"

"Not entirely, madame, though conjecture enables me to form some idea of them; but as I may possibly be mistaken, you will, I trust, excuse my not being more explicit."

"They very probably allude to the affairs of Luchese, and will perhaps be necessary in the adjustment of that business," said the countess. "If you would entrust them to me, count Giorgio,

for a short time, I should not be dilatory in repaying the obligation, and will return them when called for."

"The instant I have made myself master of their contents, they shall be at the service of your excellenza, if, consistently with my honour, I can part from them."

"You must be aware, signor conde," continued the persevering lady, "that there are in all families various domestic arrangements, which it is uncomfortable to all parties to have disclosed to those who are not deeply interested in them, and such may be the case with the papers Accursi has deposited in your hands. I would willingly redeem them unread, at any price, or at least must be most anxious to know where they are deposited, in case of accidents to yourself, which Heaven forbid, as you wish them not to fall into other hands, I presume, than those in which Della Bardia himself has placed them."

The bribe thus held out might have purchased the accordance of the Greek to

any terms, but he hoped to get the lady more completely in his power, and was not fully aware of the strength of those ties by which he held her in subjection.

“The solemn pledge which I have given to my lamented friend upon this subject, is my only motive for not complying instantly with the wish of your excellenza,” he replied, “and whatever may be the contents of them, I trust you may rely upon my honour and secrecy, in their being buried in oblivion as deeply as if committed to the flames unopened.”

“I possess both the means and inclination to be grateful, count Giorgio, for any obligation you may confer, though you still object to favour me, in the highest possible way, by the immediate restoration of the deeds: but you have not yet relieved my mind from its natural anxiety respecting the present place in which these secret records are kept.”

“That they are perfectly secure your excellenza may rely: more I am not permitted to say.”

The countess was disappointed and provoked; but it was not expedient for her to irritate the count; and after a few more fruitless efforts at discovery, she desisted for the present, and entered upon general topics of conversation.

“The baroness della Bardia has, I presume, been informed of the death of her lord?” said the Greek.

“The continued state of bustle and fatigue in which all our attendants have been kept by the funerals of the baroness Solanto and Gilberto, have prevented don Sigismund hitherto from having any communication with his sister; but I believe it is his intention to invite her over shortly to Bivonia, and there too the obsequies of Della Bardia are celebrated; but I doubt not Francisca will prefer returning to her convent.”

“It is melancholy to think of such charms being sacrificed to the rigour of a monastic life,” said the count.

“It has always been my daughter’s

choice, and now, I doubt not, but it will be still more earnestly so, since her engagement has ended so fatally."

"The repugnance of the lady to her matrimonial connexion appeared extreme," replied the Greek; "but it might be timidity and reserve incidental to her secluded education."

"She has always expressed the warmest admiration for the retirement of Santa Caterina, and I would not willingly induce her again to quit it," was the answer of the lady; and after a few minutes more of unimportant conversation, the count retired to reflect on the events of the interview, and the countess Caltabellotta to devise means to circumvent his purposes, and wrest the documents from his possession. Upon the subject of Pietro she had not ventured to make any inquiries; but she had convinced herself that upon the wary Greek her chief care must now be placed, either to purchase his silence, or secure him by death or imprisonment from betraying her.



Intelligence of the proceedings of the viceroy was not long in reaching count Luna and his partisans, who lost no time in preparing for resistance, by strengthening, in every possible way, the fortifications of his castle at Bivonia, whither he removed with all his friends and adherents, his ranks having been considerably recruited by the numbers who had joined him after the fall of don Giacomo. The lady Costanza di Solanto was also conveyed to the fortress, and again Adriano vehemently pressed the celebration of the nuptials; but the health of Costanza appeared to have suffered considerably from the late events, and Sigismund was too sincerely attached to her, notwithstanding the treatment he received, to proceed to any measures which might tend to increase her malady, or risk her life, which he feared would be the consequence of using force, to a spirit so high and independent. He therefore resisted all the arguments of Adriano, and even reproached him for the ill success of some of the previous schemes

he had devised for bringing the union to the wished-for conclusion.

Peralta had long been accustomed to bear with the violence and hasty temper of his kinsman, but his end was now gained. He had, through his means, obtained a full and complete revenge against the baron Pandolfina, and neither the ties of kindred, the bonds of friendship, or the calls of honour, would have kept him longer with the party, who he perceived were approaching the end of their prosperous career, could he have made a separate treaty for himself, and by betraying the cause of which he had been the original support, have gained advantageous terms; but it was understood that the most inflexible justice would follow the victory of their opponents, and that none would be received to mercy who had been concerned in the various acts of assassination committed during the insurrection. His safety, therefore, like that of the rest of the party, consisted only in a strict union of their forces, by which they might compel

the viceregal commanders to compromise the affair, and pass a general act of amnesty; and although the baron Adriano had not now the same motives and purposes in view, as had hitherto induced him to submit to the humours of count Luna, still he considered it politic to keep on terms with him; and after a slight, though with him unusual remonstrance, he bore the reproaches of his chieftain quietly, and offered little contradiction to the complaints alleged against him.

On the tidings of the approach of the troops being brought, the most vigorous preparations were made; the whole of the spoil was removed by its different possessors to Bivonia, as the most secure asylum, and all who had ranged themselves beneath the banners of Luna and Peralta, knowing that their existence depended on their courage and exertions, made ready for the storm with all the spirit they possessed.

It was determined that they should en-

deavour, by striking a panic into their enemies, to induce them to listen to terms, before the strength of the respective parties could be brought to a trial, and by not waiting the attack, shew how little they feared the powers which could be brought against them.

Calandrino, Pietro Infontanetta, and count Giorgio, volunteered their services in conducting an ambuscade. Their offer was accepted, and a position taken up in a narrow pass amongst the hills between Castronovo and Sciacca, from whence, after having done what injury they could to the advanced guard of their adversaries, they might, with little difficulty, escape to the shelter of Bivonia.

The Imperial troops, unsuspecting any danger, and relying upon the terror their approach would excite among the rebels, advanced in an unguarded and disorderly manner; and had not the partisans of Luna been premature in their attack, might have received a severe blow; but the sig-

nal was given injudiciously early, and before any considerable number had entered the pass.

A panic seized the advancing army, and they retreated towards the main body, leaving thirty of their number dead upon the field. Federico and Gaetano were amongst the first to rally the flying soldiers, and leading them back gallantly to the charge, their enemies retired from their position, and succeeded in reaching Bivonia without any loss.

The Imperial forces advanced without any farther interruption to Sciacca, detaching a sufficient body to watch the motions of the enemy, and guard the avenues to the fortress, to prevent the future assaults or flight of the garrison. A messenger was dispatched by count Luna to the commander of the forces, but he was instantly sent back, with an order for the unconditional surrender of the place, and all the offenders, and denouncing the severest punishment against those who resisted. The lives of those who had not been

immediately concerned in the murders of Perollo, Statella, or Ferrara, or in open arms against them, were the only exceptions made, and even these were not to be granted, if they remained in the fortress after the summons to surrender had been rejected.

This answer shewed a firmness which count Luna did not expect from the general after the success he had obtained; and the desertion of the barone del Nadore during the night produced a general sensation throughout the garrison, which augured ill for the steadiness of their resolution. Del Nadore had indeed not appeared personally in any of the acts of hostility; but he had been amongst the first to join the standard of count Luna. He had quitted his post as a magistrate of the city, and during the whole proceeding, remained with the party as their aider and abettor. This he now pretended to say was merely an act of self-preservation; he called every saint to witness the remonstrances he had made to don Sigismund,

and the dangers he had run in opposing his outrageous proceedings, and with the most abject meanness implored that his life might be spared, under any circumstances, however severe, which the clemency of the viceroy chose to decree.

As the baron had not stained his hands in the blood which was shed, he might be included in the promise made by the general, and it was not considered politic to act with severity to the first deserter who had obeyed the summons, and submitted himself peaceably. It was hoped and expected that the example of a person of Del Nadore's rank, thus coming over and shewing the bad opinion he had of the cause in which he was engaged, might have great weight with the inferior soldiery; and the barone was accordingly received to mercy, and publicly conducted through the streets of the city to a place of security, till his future destiny could be properly determined.

The feelings of Federico, on approaching Sciacca, were such as all must compas-

sionate, and the most considerate attention was shewn him by all the officers. He could not but remember how recently he had viewed its "distant spires," with such buoyant feelings of delight and hope as his present distress told him he should feel no more; and perhaps his presentiments were right; for even when time has taken off the keen edge of sorrow, joy does not necessarily succeed, and there is in youth itself a capability of brilliant happiness, of which no successes in after life can ever bring a repetition. When we have lived long, and learned how often we welcome what it were better to reject, we consider before we rejoice; and while we consider the first bright hue of pleasure has passed away, and though we may be gainers by our gratifications being more lasting, still it is uncertain whether we do not, in the loss of our enthusiasm to enjoy them, pay too costly a price for their durability.

Pignatelli rode by the side of his friend; it was too soon to attempt consolation, and



he felt for him in silence. As they came within sight of Perollo Castle, Federico looked at Gaetano, and pointed to the dismantled towers; he could not speak, but his look was eloquent in grief.

When they entered the city, the change was still greater in the appearance of every thing around than could have been imagined; instead of the beautiful city they had ridden through a month before, where all was life, wealth, and bustle, they now saw ruins in every direction; the roofs, which had echoed to sounds of gladness at their approach, were now tenantless or destroyed. Federico's thoughts could scarcely for a moment wander from his loved and murdered father, and Sciacca seemed to him like one vast tomb to his memory; his manly figure, splendid costume, and cheerful countenance, as he had so often seen him in these now-deserted streets, seemed, in his mind's eye, perpetually opposed to the degrading condition in which his lifeless form had so lately traversed

these same paths; and, in the agony of his feelings, he thought that one great sacrifice of all connected with Luna and Peralta, would be too small a revenge for his father's individual wrongs.

Their headquarters, while the troops remained in Sciacca, it had been previously agreed, should be at the house of Francisco Perollo (one of the giurati who had escaped); and when they arrived there, the distress of Federico had arisen to such a height, that Gaetano feared for his senses, and determined not to let him see the baroness in that state; he therefore requested him to wait while he sent a messenger to don Paolo, that his too-sudden appearance might not overpower his mother, and during the interval this gave him, endeavoured to sooth him to more composure.

Don Paolo came to them instantly, and as Federico threw himself into his arms, he said—"Oh, what a home am I returned to! Why, why did I go away? why did I leave him whom I ought to have died to save?"

“Calm yourself, my dear child,” said don Paolo, in a voice scarcely audible from emotion, “and do not add to what you must feel by useless and undeserved self-reproaches; rather thank Heaven, which mercifully ordained that you should be preserved as a stay to your widowed mother and her orphaned children, and a chief, under whose banners your father’s death may be avenged, and your family again collected in peace. In all our trials, there is always something to be thankful for. The child of your friend, don Gaetano, now more than repays her adopted mother’s kindness, and the comfort she has been to her, in this season of affliction, has been far greater than any which human wisdom could have devised. Now compose yourself, Federico; we will go to your mother. Do not agitate her by your grief; her own is sufficient; but she bears it, as indeed she does every thing, with the patience of a woman, and the fortitude of a man. I only fear, when I witness it, that such grief will not soon

yield. Signor Pignatelli, do not leave us; your presence, after the first few minutes, will relieve us all, and the support you will be to the spirits of her children cannot fail to communicate itself to the heart of the baroness."

When they reached Santa Martha, Federico could scarcely support himself, and when shewn to the apartment where his mother was alone, he felt at first unable to enter; but at last making a violent effort for composure, he opened the door. The alteration which her sufferings had made in her appearance was so great, that notwithstanding the full occupation of his thoughts, he started with alarm at the sight. She tried to rise from her seat when she saw her son, but could not, and he could only throw himself on his knees before her, clasp her in his arms, and give way to the bitterness of sorrow.

The instant that Federico left them, don Paolo had inquired for Marguerita and the children; she was very much affected at seeing Gaetano; with him always came

the remembrance of her father, and the affection he had expressed for him; and this was not a time for such things to be forgotten. Marguerita, like all the rest of the party, was faded by watching and tears; but Gaetano thought her paleness now better than beauty, and felt his interest in her increased beyond measure in his short but eventful absence. The respectful tenderness of his manner towards her was more grateful now than it could ever have been before, and was more expressive than any professions he could have made.

After a very short time, don Paolo proposed their going to the baroness—"This first interview with Federico," he said, "must be too painful to both of them, for us to leave it long uninterrupted, and all together we shall be less distressing than any one singly."

When Gaetano appeared, it caused the baroness a violent struggle with her feelings to obtain any thing like self-posses-

sion ; years can pass in thought with such rapidity, that while he walked a few paces towards her, she had reviewed his arrival at the Casa di Perollo, seen again the joyous welcome and animated delight of Pandolfina, and compared them with the frightful reverse which now presented itself; and, as Gaetano stooped to kiss her hands, he felt her tears fall silently on his head, and that she trembled exceedingly.

For a minute all were silent; there seemed no safe subject to talk of; those present did but recall the remembrance of the absent, and of all the absent, they could think of none but Pandolfina.

At length Gaetano ventured to make some remark upon public affairs, and don Paolo exerted himself to inquire about the probability of peace, and to support some sort of conversation, while Marguerita endeavoured to amuse the children, and prevent their asking any unfortunate questions, or giving to their brother and his

friend any details which would distress their mother.

Conversation in such a party must necessarily languish, where the thoughts of all are directed to the one subject, which each feels must not be mentioned; but the constraint at such times is but adding another pang, and gradually the objects of their thoughts were brought to view, and they talked of the troops and the commanders, and the projected attack upon Bivonia; and as the baroness became sensible to fear for Federico's safety, her heart told her how much she still had to lose, and she almost felt her tears less bitter, and her bosom less oppressed.

They all seemed to have gained some degree of composure, when some one entered the apartment, and addressed Federico as baron Pandolfina! It was the first time they had heard it. Federico covered his face with his hands, and sobbed audibly. The baroness seemed fainting; Marguerita hastened to her, but she said—

"No, my love, I am better; I must get used to this; the shock I have outlived must render all others comparatively light."

It was long before the party regained the appearance of tranquillity; but the exertions of Gaetano, Marguerita, and don Paolo, in some degree succeeded, and the remainder of the day passed in calm and melancholy endeavours of all parties to lighten the burthen which each was compelled to bear. In the evening a council of war was held, to which the two young men and don Paolo were summoned; it having been the strict command of the viceroy, that every possible attention should be shewn to Federico, and to all the friends of the late gallant chieftain of the house of Perollo.

The giurati of the city were in the first instance displaced from their offices, and orders given for the immediate apprehension of their persons, with the exception of Francisco Perollo. Pietro Laurifici, and his companions, Baldasare and Taly-



avia, who had concealed themselves, were found guilty for their cowardice in deserting their posts, and leaving don Giacomo and Statella unsupported by the arms of the citizens, by which they might have been in all probability safely defended.

It was also determined that the troops should rest for a day or two, leaving the avenues to Bivonia guarded so effectually as to prevent the escape of the insurgents, and then by a general assault endeavour to carry the fortress.

To encourage the soldiers, the plunder was promised them ; and the panic excited by the unexpected attack upon them on their way, was soon dissipated in the desire of an opportunity to get such a booty. Orders were given through the whole body, that any ladies who might be met with in the castle should be treated with the utmost respect, and instantly conducted to the general.

Don Paolo, in consequence of having surrendered himself a prisoner to the party

of don Sigismund, could not act in hostility to them; but no entreaties were able to prevent Federico from joining in the expedition, to revenge the outrages committed against his father.

CHAPTER VIII.  
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And flame for flame, and blood for blood, must tell,  
The tide of triumph ebbs that flowed too well.

LORD BYRON.

**DURING** the two days which the troops remained in Sciacca, to recover from the fatigue of their rapid march from Messina, the party of don Sigismund lost several of their number by desertion. The rejection of all terms but those of unconditional surrender, instead of exciting the courage of desperation, had depressed the spirits of the men, and count Luna now felt the loss of the gallant Luchese, the undaunted boldness of Accursi d'Amato, and the intrepid coolness of Gilberto, which were but ill supplied by the vacillating irresolution of Maurici, the crooked policy of Adriano, and the rash and ill-directed impetuosity of Calogero Calan-

drino, who were now his principal advisers.

During the attack upon Perollo, he had lost the flower of his troops, and the men who had since joined him were a loose undisciplined multitude, impatient of control, and uninfluenced by any other feeling than that of personal safety, and prepared to accept any terms by which their lives could be spared.

The vigour of the first preparations had subsided in a short time, and though the success of the ambuscade had in some degree raised their courage, yet it fell again upon the reply returned to the count by the commander of the forces, and an universal gloom hung over the late triumphant insurgents.

Don Sigismund persevered in his resolution to defend himself to the last moment, and indignantly rejected the advice of Adriano to endeavour to escape to Rome, and there plead in person for the intercession of Clement in his favour. Peralta would willingly have persuaded his

kinsman to abandon Bivonia and his connexions there to the vengeance of the viceroy, and by securing their own persons, to preserve a remnant of the house of Luna and Peralta from the extermination with which it was threatened.

At length the day arrived which was destined to decide the fate of Bivonia. The troops marched soon after midnight from Sciacca, in high spirits from the anticipation of the booty they hoped to acquire, and encouraged by the representations of the deserters, with the expectation of no difficult conquest.

The assault was commenced with undaunted resolution, and for a time the conflict was maintained with a resistance unexpected by the assailants. At length however a breach was effected. Federico and Gaetano rushed in at the head of the conquerors, and the partisans of Luna gave way in every direction: Geronimo Calandrino fell by the hand of Perollo, who sought eagerly in the thickest of the fight to meet with Luna himself. The

person of Adriano was secured by Gaetano; and Sigismund, after beholding the extinction of his hopes and the carnage of his friends, escaped through a secret passage which led beyond the castle walls.

Amongst the slain were Geronimo Calandrino, Pietro Imbiagnia, and Infontanetta. Calogero Calandrino was made prisoner after a desperate resistance, and having received numberless wounds. Count Giorgio was discovered in a private apartment; but it did not appear from whom he received his death. One deep wound in the back, as if inflicted upon him in his flight, was the only mark upon his person; and it was not the character of the Greek to turn his face from danger: his fate however was almost unnoticed in the general slaughter, and the short-lived wonder it excited was soon forgotten.

The principal captives were Adriano, Marco Luchese, the two brothers of Imbiagnia, and several nobles, who had attached themselves to the party of count

**Luna.** They were all immediately marched under a strong guard to Sciacca, and lodged in the prisons of the city.

With frantic impatience, Perollo had cut his way through all opposition; the remembrance of his wrongs gave him resistless strength, and he was also fighting for the release of Costanza from persecution and captivity. Pignatelli kept as near to his friend as possible during the conflict, and whithersoever they directed their steps, the enemy fell before them. The instant the castle was gained, and the insurgents had ceased from opposition, Federico demanded of a prisoner where count Luna had confined his captives? The man himself could give no information, but offered to point out some one who could, and directed Federico to an elderly man who was a confidential servant of count Luna. Perollo inquired if he could direct him to the apartment of the captive.

After some hesitation, he was answered in the affirmative.

"Conduct me thither instantly," said the impatient Perollo.

"I have not the keys of the tower, signor."

"We want no keys; point out the way, and we will remove every obstacle."

The man led to the interior of the building, and ascending the staircase of one of the towers most remote from the point of attack, shewed a high and massive door, which was firmly fastened, and resisted all the efforts of Federico and Gaetano. They summoned some of their men, and, after a little trouble, succeeded in forcing the door.

"There is one prisoner, signor, confined in the principal chamber of this tower, and another in the dungeons beneath, but I know of no more in the castle."

Federico scarcely listened to the speaker, but flew forward the instant the fastenings were removed, to assure his Costanza of her liberty and safety; he threw open the inner door with the eagerness of a lover, and beheld, not Costanza, but her father,



the baron di Solanto, alone, and waiting in anxious astonishment the event of the tumults which raged round his prison.

"Signor Perollo," he exclaimed, "and Pignatelli too! Then am I again restored to liberty."

"Where is donna Costanza, signor?" asked Perollo, hastily.

"Anywhere, I trust, but in this abode of violence and tyranny."

"We must seek her instantly, or count Luna may attempt to remove her beyond the power of rescue."

"Is it possible," exclaimed the baron, "that Sigismund di Luna knew of my imprisonment, or extended his outrages to my unprotected child?"

"We have no time at present, signor, for explanations; let us seek the signora without delay."

"The man who guided us hither," said Pignatelli, "mentioned another captive, who was inclosed in the dungeon beneath."

"Surely not even the barbarity of

Luna could have consigned the signora di Solanto to such a place," replied Federico; "but we will ascertain it speedily."

Having forced the doors to the dark recess under the tower, they reached the melancholy cell of a being whose appearance was scarcely human; squalid misery, in all its extremest horrors, was depicted in the unhappy creature, who was found chained to the wall of this dark and dreary prison. The appearance of his deliverers produced a wild and inarticulate cry, which made them at first fear for his senses.

Perollo waited to inquire no farther, and Gaetano commanding every care to be taken of the miserable victim, followed his friend and the baron Solanto to the court above. Federico now seemed wild with anxiety, and impatiently made his way, still attended by the baron and Pignatelli, to the great hall of the castle, where the general was giving orders for the pursuit of Sigismund, who had escaped during the tumult. A group of officers surrounded him, and by his side

stood a female in deep mourning, and closely veiled.

As the three gentlemen entered, she turned her head, and exclaiming—"My father! oh, my father!" burst through the crowd, and in an instant was hanging on the neck of the baron Solanto.

"I had intended this fair prize for you, baron Pandolfina," said the commander; "but she seems to have discovered one who has claims to which all others must give place."

Costanza wept for some minutes in her father's arms, who, as he clasped her to his bosom, was scarcely less affected.

"Where is your mother, my beloved child?" he asked with some hesitation.

Costanza looked at her mourning dress, and a fresh burst of sorrow told the melancholy tale.

"The present scene is not calculated for explanations, signor," said the commander, "and we can afford you, I fear, no means of privacy; but an escort to Sciacca is instantly at your service, and the sooner

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the lady is removed from this place the better; you will command in all things my assistance. My orders are to raze this fortress to the ground, and to secure the persons of count Luna and his adherents. The count has, I am sorry to say, escaped us for the present; but I have sent out parties in all directions, and trust we shall still capture the chief of these daring insurgents."

Solanto could only comprehend part of this address, but he expressed his thanks to the officer, and looking towards Costanza, she implored him to take her to the baroness Pandolfina.

"My mother," said Federico, "has found an asylum at the convent of Santa Martha, and with all the welcome she can now give, will most readily receive the lady Costanza into her company of mourners."

A lettiga was prepared without delay, and in it the baron Solanto and his daughter proceeded towards Sciacca, accompanied by Perollo, Pignatelli, and a small

party of the cavalry. As they were quitting Bivonia, one of the people in whose hands the wretched captive had been left, approached to speak to Federico.

"The person you gave into our custody, signor, offers to confess some secret of importance."

"Let him then be conducted to the general, who will act as he thinks proper," replied Perollo, as he hastened after the lettiga.

On their way to Sciacca, Costanza narrated, as intelligibly as she could, the events which had succeeded her father's sudden and mysterious departure, the shock it had given to her mother's health, the kindness of the Perollo family, and the dreadful catastrophe which had rendered their hospitable mansion no longer her abode. Of the conduct of Luna, she could not think with composure, and the mention of her mother's death caused considerable interruption to her tale, both from her own distress and that of her father.

Upon the first rumour of danger, Luna had caused her to be conveyed to Bivonia, and though treated with the greatest respect, yet she was watched with the caution of a prisoner. Upon the approach of the troops to the attack, don Sigismund had sought her apartment, and in the most passionate terms implored her pity and forgiveness; entreating that if he fell in the ensuing action, she would endeavour to efface from her memory the offences which his love had induced him to commit.

Costanza, weak and dispirited, implored him in a manner which she had not before condescended to assume, that if he hoped for any diminution in her indignation, he would relieve her anxiety respecting her father. Luna was overpowered by his emotion, and trembled violently; Costanza renewed her supplications. He was about to reply, when he was summoned to the defence of his castle, and a peal of ordnance hurried him away to the walls without a moment for explanation.

The daughter of Solanto had awaited in the extremest agitation the event of the attack, for she still hoped that the complete subjugation of Luna and his party would throw some light upon the mysterious loss of her father; and when the count was no longer present, the impression which his anguish had at the time made upon her feelings, faded before the recollection of her mother's death, the murder of Perollo, the agony she suffered on her father's account, and all the train of sorrows which had been brought on by the violence of her persecutor. She therefore ardently prayed that victory might crown the party of the assailants.

The clang of arms in the interior, and the cessation of the artillery, proclaimed the entrance of the troops. All her attendants, except old Beatrice, had fled; and when the invaders burst into her room, she was found endeavouring to support her faithful nurse, who was nearly dead with terror. The men who were entering paused at the doorway, and assured her,

that they had strict orders to shew the ladies in the castle every possible respect, and begged to be allowed to conduct her to the general.

Costanza complied without hesitation, and was conducted to the great hall, where she was received with every attention by the commander, who was just informing her that the young baron Pandolfina was anxiously seeking her, when Federico entered the hall, followed by her father and Gaetano.

In her first moments of joy at meeting her lost parent, the daughter of Solanto had paid little attention to Perollo, who did not intrude upon her notice, but felt happier than he had done for some time, in thus contributing to her release, and restoring her to the protection of her father; and as he rode by the lettiga, he watched for every opportunity which gave him a view of her features.

Having satisfied the curiosity of the baron, Costanza sought to learn the particulars of his sudden disappearance from



the cassino. His adventures were soon told; he had been wandering in the valley at some distance from his own abode, when he unexpectedly felt himself seized from behind by several persons. A cloak was thrown over his head, and he was dragged with great rapidity to some considerable distance; he was then uncovered for an instant, when he beheld several armed men around him, and one person with the vizor of his helmet closed, who seemed to be the director of the affair. Solanto in vain endeavoured to shake off his assailants; he was bound, and again blindfolded; all his entreaties could produce no explanation. He was desired to remain silent under pain of death, and being mounted on a horse, he was made secure to the person who was placed before him, and carried, at a furious rate, for a considerable time. During the whole of that night they remained on their horses, sometimes stationary, as if for the purpose of concealment, at others rapidly moving on. When morning came, they

dismounted, and he was led some short distance, when they appeared to be making their way through bushes, over a steep and rugged path, and his eyes were for the first time uncovered in some subterranean apartment, where refreshment was offered, and he was allowed to rest several hours, surrounded by his guards, from whom he could still gain no intelligence. The person with his vizor closed never left him for an instant, and from his height, and the tone of his voice, as he once or twice gave orders, Solanto thought he recognized the baron Adriano; and as he was the only person he could suppose to be his enemy in the island, he doubted not but he had caused him to be seized, on some plan of revenge. It was in vain he asked for explanation, and he was obliged to resign himself to his fate, trusting to the exertions of his friends for his delivery. Towards night he was again blindfolded, and led by a winding ascent, as he conjectured, through some parts of a large

building, to the tower from whence Federico had released him.

During his long and solitary confinement, he was treated with attention and respect; but the impenetrable fidelity of the person who waited upon him, resisted every bribe which could be made, either to aid his escape, convey the slightest intelligence to his family, or even inform him where or by whom he was thus kept in confinement. Anxiety for the fate of his wife and child, and distress at their suffering for him, weighed heavily on his mind, and had begun to affect his health, when he was thus providentially restored to liberty and peace.

The baroness received the lady Costanza and her father with melancholy satisfaction. Her joy at the return of Federico, safe and unwounded, was expressed in grateful thanks to Heaven, for preserving to her this solace and support in her affliction; and having got over the first shock of seeing him after the loss of his father, she could not endure to part with

him from her sight; and every other friend, though they might at the first interview cause a pang at the recollection of the past, yet it was comparatively so slight to what she felt when Federico returned, that the effect was not more than her calm and dignified resolution could generally conquer; and whatever her own feelings might be, she rarely displayed them, or distressed others by the sight of her hopeless misery. The attentions of Federico to Costanza were distant and respectful; yet there was something in them which could not escape the observation of the baron Solanto; and it was not long before he received from his daughter a candid avowal of all that had passed; to which he gave his most cordial approbation, but forbore, in the recent state of affliction under which all parties had suffered, to allude to or notice what he had learned, or what passed before him daily.

Upon the destruction of the castle of Bivonia, the civil power proceeded immediately to the exercise of their judicial

authority. The imprisonment of the *giurati* was followed by a general sentence against the city, which was declared guilty of the crime of lese majesty, for not having aided Statella and Perollo against count Luna, who was, with all his adherents, proclaimed rebels against their liege lord the emperor, and a reward offered for the apprehension of the count, or any of his abettors who might have eluded the search of the captors of his fortress. A heavy fine was imposed upon the city, and the estates of all the rebels declared confiscated to the use of the state. The fine was paid without loss of time, and Sciacca absolved from further punishment. From the confiscated estates it was ordered, that the losses of the baron Pandolfina, by the demolition and plunder of his father's castle, should be restored.

Don Paolo exerted all his power in favour of his friend, Ferrante Luchese, and procured the mildest sentence which could in justice be passed upon him, that of banishment from his native country.

He had been so distinguished a person in every part of the siege, and was so clearly convicted of having been the first to lay hands upon the city artillery, through which the final catastrophe was produced, that his fault could not be entirely passed over; he was however restored to his honours and estates through the intercession of don Paolo, whose exertions in his favour ceased not after the first cause for them had passed away. Erasmo Loria also met with slighter punishment than most of the confederates, in consequence of an application from Federico on his behalf, and he was only sent into temporary banishment. The barone del Nadore and Giovanni Maurici were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and the forfeiture of their property. Calandrino, Infonnetta, the baron Adriano, with several others, were condemned to suffer by the hands of the public executioner: the former however died from his wounds in prison, and the two latter were from time to time reprieved, till their sentence was

finally mitigated to solitary confinement during life in the prisons at Messina, with the confiscation of all their property. Three days after the fall of Bivonia, a number of the inferior tools of the party were hanged and quartered, few escaping, from the prompt and decisive exertion of the administration of justice.

The countess Caltabellotta had, during all these proceedings, remained at the Casa di Luna with a few attendants. She had beheld with ungovernable fury the entrance of the troops into Sciacca, and the return of Federico Perollo; every succeeding hour brought fresh misfortunes in its train—the fall of Bivonia, and the flight of Sigismund, a rebel proscribed and abandoned. This seemed the climax of her misery; yet she was destined to suffer in all its bitterness the retribution due for her dark crimes. For some few days she remained unmolested at the castle, and was only tortured by her uncertainty as to the fate of Sigismund, and the disgrace and suffering to which her

friends were condemned. But at length the thunder burst over her head, and she felt all the horrors of her individual situation. The sentence of attainder and confiscation against count Luna had been succeeded by an order from the ruling powers to take possession of his property in the name of government.

Every delicacy was at first shewn to the feelings of the countess, but she had the grief of seeing the mansion of Luna and Peralta, for so many ages the seat of their illustrious line, taken possession of by the emissaries of a party she abhorred and detested; whilst their fortress at Bivonia, the strength of their family, was ruined and destroyed. The seals of office were affixed to every remnant of their property, and she was about to quit for ever the abode which it had been the highest ambition of her life to call her own. She was awaiting, in an agony of grief, the litter which was to convey her to a cassino of her own, and contemplating, with the extremest feelings of deso-



lation, the future fate of herself and all who were dearest to her upon earth, when an officer of justice, accompanied by several attendants, entered the apartment. She rose from her seat, and with no abatement of the proud and haughty demeanour which in her brightest days had been so conspicuous in her character, demanded what brought them thus unannounced into her presence, and indignantly commanded them to retire.

"I have an order," said the principal officer, "to attach the person of Maria, countess of Caltabellotta, Bivonia, and Selafani, to answer for sundry high crimes and misdemeanours."

"What!" exclaimed the lady, furious at the insult, "have these Spanish butchers no other victims to drag before their murderous tribunal, that they thus seek the unprotected females of Luna and Peralta, to punish for high treason against the person of Giacomo Perollo? Pray who are my accusers?"

"Your excellenza," replied the officer,

"stands charged, upon the confession of Pietro di Forni, with various crimes, which at their leisure the high justiciaries will investigate. In the meantime I have an order to remove your person to the penitentiary convent of Santa Lucia, where you will remain till proceedings can be instituted to inquire properly into this affair."

From the moment the name of Pietro was mentioned, the spirit of the countess sunk into abject despondency. She inquired no further, and regarded with sullen dismay all that passed around her.

On arriving at the convent, her person was searched, to remove any secret means she might possess for self-destruction, which was apprehended from the known violence of her temper. Jewels of immense value were found upon her, which were instantly taken away, and she was removed to one of the dismal cells in the most wretched of all abodes, a penitentiary convent, and there abandoned to her lonely meditations, which soon produced

so powerful an effect upon a mind which had neither innocence to support its agony, or patience to endure it, that before morning the countess Caltabellotta was a maniac, from which state, during the remainder of her miserable existence, she never for an instant recovered.

CHAPTER IX.  
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————— Even-handed justice  
Returns th' ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips. MACBETH.

WHEN Sigismund perceived that all was lost, and the fortress in the hands of his enemies, he hurried from the scene of contest, and succeeded in gaining the subterranean passage by which the baron Solanto had been conveyed into the castle, the entrance to which was so carefully concealed in the building, as to render it almost impossible to be discovered. As soon as the count had gained this place, and secured the doors which led to it, he paused for some time to consider the best method of securing his ultimate retreat. The mouth of the passage, which was at some short distance from the castle, required an acquaintance with the existenc

of the place to make it an object even of suspicion ; and it was so well covered by a thicket, and huge fragments of rock, as to make it difficult to be found by a stricter search than was likely to be made in the tumult and eagerness with which he expected to be pursued.

One of the great objects of his enemies would be, beyond a doubt, to possess themselves of his person ; and upon his escape depended the future safety of such of his partisans as might be so fortunate as to survive the general destruction which threatened all connected with the house of Luna è Peralta. He therefore determined to remain concealed in the cavern till the darkness of night might favour his escape, and having from his infancy been well acquainted with the surrounding country, he hoped, by keeping along various tracks in the mountains inaccessible to the cavalry, to elude pursuit altogether.

During the hours he passed in this solitary asylum, the mind of Luna suffered all the pangs of remorse, disappointed

ambition, hopeless love, and desponding wretchedness; so mixed and yet so varied, that there was scarce a subject on which his thoughts could fix, which was not replete with anguish and despair. It was true, he had accomplished his purpose to the fullest extent, as far as the destruction of Perollo was his object; but even in his proudest moments of triumph, the reproaches of Luchese, and the honours paid to the memory of his enemy, had clouded all his enjoyments; and now that nothing remained of all he had laboured to effect, but the sad and heavy punishment for his offences, which had already lighted on so many of his adherents, and hung over his own head, as it were suspended by a single hair, he felt the weakness as well as the wickedness of his deeds. Thus to look to the past, was to recall only the baneful product of his own inhuman revenge, to conjure up the shades of Della Bardia, Gilberto, Ferrara, and the multitudes who had fallen in his cause, or what was worse, to remind him of the honours which had

been shewn to his enemy, when stripped of all those attributes which purchase the applause of man. Defeated, murdered, and insulted, the body of Pandolfina had been as much an object of public veneration and respect, as when living in all the pomp of splendour and affluence, dealing round him the favours of government, and environed by all the honours of popularity and power; whilst he himself, in the hour of victory, had been pursued by the curses of the people, and the reproaches of those whom he loved and esteemed.

If the thoughts of Luna were fixed upon the future, there was as little cause for hope or satisfaction. He had calculated, beyond a doubt, during the tide of his prosperous fortune, on the success of his application to the pope, whose petition he thought the emperor could be in no situation to resist; but now that the hour was come when this protection was most needful, he felt the insecurity of the hope on which he had relied. It was a con-

siderable hazard whether he should escape to make the trial, as he was well aware that his enemies would endeavour to prevent him from applying to the pontiff; and even should he succeed in effecting his escape, it was by no means certain that the representations of Clement would be attended to. He had now adjusted all his controversies with the emperor, and it was not probable he would again jeopardy his state, or risk the event of another contest, even if he were able, in order to support so distant a connexion; and Charles had in several instances shewn an inflexible regard to justice, which no persuasions had been able to move. There was still another subject from which Sigismund would willingly, if possible, have diverted his thoughts, namely, the daughter of Solanto.

Cut off from all chance of success with her, he now trembled at the thought of her being in the hands of his more fortunate rival; and when she should discover the treatment her father had received at



his hands, through the instigation of Adriano (who had in this, as in every other instance, made the friendship of Sigismund a tool to work his own schemes of revenge), the influence this must have upon her mind would increase her dislike of himself.

A prey to reflections like these, Sigismund awaited the approach of night. As soon as the shades of evening had darkened the surrounding objects, he ventured into the thicket, and carefully examined, as far as he could, the state of things around him. The towers of Bivonia were still red with the glare of the flames which had enveloped a considerable part of them, and told but too clearly the fate of his friends and adherents. Cautiously he advanced from the shelter of the thicket, and taking his course along the craggy side of an adjacent hill, he could distinctly hear from the valley below the trampling of steeds, and the voices of his pursuers. He was well acquainted with every turn and winding of the hills, and keeping

carefully along the highest and most difficult passes, he eluded the numerous bands who were spread over the country with the hopes of intercepting his retreat.

The Castle of San Bartolomeo presented to Sigismund the nearest and best asylum he could hope to reach, and his unknown sister Francisca was almost the only connexion with whom he could expect to be safe, as her existence was known to but few, and those his nearest relatives. Thither then he determined to direct his course. Several times during his hazardous journey, he was within so short a distance of his pursuers, as clearly to distinguish their conversation; at others he was in the greatest danger from the badness of the paths through which he took his way; but just as morning dawned, he arrived near the ruined towers of San Bartolomeo, after a long and most fatiguing march over the worst route which could be found through the rugged mountains of the Val di Mazzara.

It was with difficulty the count as-

cended the pathway to the castle, so nearly overpowered was he by fatigue, and had the asylum he sought been a short distance farther, he could not have reached it.

Della Bardia had brought all his retainers to serve his kinsman at Sciacca, and it was not therefore probable that there were many inhabitants in the falling mansion, and the early hour prevented his being observed by any of the peasantry in the adjacent hamlet. Sigismund long thundered at the gate without any person appearing. At length an old man demanded from a grated window, who thus disturbed the inhabitants of the castle?

“A messenger from count Luna,” he replied, “who must instantly see the baroness della Bardia.”

The man withdrew from the window without making any reply, and Sigismund was again compelled to wait some time, and was renewing his calls for admission, when the old man again appeared, accompanied by another person, who repeated the questions. This proved to be the

castellan, who had been left by Della Bardia in charge of the fortress, and who having been in Sciacca, knew the person of count Luna, but not immediately recognizing him in the dim light of the morning, seemed to hesitate as to the propriety of admitting a stranger. From his appearance however he perceived he must be some cavalier of rank, and descending to the great entrance, he slowly unclosed the wicket, and admitted the weary fugitive. Instantly remembering the chief upon this nearer view, the castellan uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“Silence!” said Sigismund, pointing to the old man who had followed him; “conduct me to some apartment where I may rest myself, and inform the baroness della Bardia that a messenger from her brother requests an immediate interview.”

The castellan understood the injunction, and conducted the count in silence to one of the most habitable of the rooms. When they had left the old man, Sigis-

mund enjoined the strictest silence on his attendant, and commanded him, at the peril of his life, to secure the other man from mentioning his arrival beyond the walls of the castle; and as soon as he had informed the baroness of his arrival, to procure him some refreshment, of which he stood in the greatest need.

Count Luna had always been to the inhabitants of San Bartolomeo as a person to whom all the emperors and monarchs in the universe were far inferior. The castellan himself had seen him in Sciacca, attended with all the feudal state of Luna Castle, beyond which his ideas of worldly grandeur could not mount; and though he now came stripped of all external ceremonies, yet there was a dignity in his manner, which, united to a knowledge of his greatness, caused his commands to be received as edicts from a divinity.

“ Shall I announce your altezza in person to the baroness ?” asked the man.

“ No,” replied Luna, “ inform her that a friend of her late lord, and a messenger

from her brother, requests to see her upon business of importance."

The time of Francisca had passed in a dull uniformity at San Bartolomeo, which to any one else would have been the most irksome state of existence; but she had, from her earliest childhood, been habituated to the strict confinement and dull monotony of Santa Caterina, and the exchange was scarcely for the worse. The conversation of old Beatrice might be less edifying than that of the nuns, but it was frequently more entertaining, and less likely to be disturbed by petulant ill-humour, than her former companions. The only employments to which she was accustomed were her beads and her embroidery, and those were easily continued. So firm was her reliance on Providence, that even anticipating the return of Della Bardia did not much disturb her composure, and she was resolutely determined to undergo any trials, rather than abandon her intention of devoting herself to the cloister. She had learned the death of her

persecutor, and considered it as a manifest instance of the protection of her tutelary saint.

Awaiting the communication with her family, who she did not doubt would assist her in returning to Santa Caterina, the summons which she now received was not unexpected; and rising from her couch, where Beatrice had awakened her, she prepared with alacrity to receive the commands of her mother or brother by this messenger, who, she supposed, was to communicate their decision upon her future destiny.

At times she had felt great anxiety and curiosity to see those near but unknown relatives; yet when she considered the separation which was to take place as soon as an intimacy could be formed, she thought it was perhaps more to her peace not to create any links which might bind her to the world, and excite regrets at parting from it. The life of the novice had been a constant course of deprivation, and her mind was strengthened by a habit of self-

denial, which might have been impossible to many older and more prudent reasoners than Francisca, and by the various examples by which her memory was stored, of saints, virgins, confessors, and martyrs, who had broken all the ties of natural affection, and been chronicled by the writers of their legends for such acts of unamiable supererogation.

Count Luna had, during the time she prepared herself, obtained such refreshment as the castle afforded, and he was still at his repast when she entered the room, and modestly, but with an air of dignity, required the purport of his visit. Sigismund looked at her for a few moments in pleased astonishment, and rising from his seat, affectionately approached to embrace her, forgetful that he was to her an unknown stranger. Francisca retreated in some confusion.

“Forgive me, my dear sister,” he said, “for not first announcing myself as your brother, Sigismund di Luna; we meet indeed under bad auspices, but let us hope



the clouds which now obscure the glories of our house will soon be cleared away, and that friendship and affection may have many years in store, to compensate the long estrangement you have suffered from your friends and family."

Francisca had been totally unused to the society of men; Accursi d'Amato was the first she had ever had any knowledge of, and from him and count Giorgio she had formed such an opinion of them, that all the ideas of relationship, the prepossessing appearance of Luna, and his gentle and affectionate manner, could not at once overcome the influence of her first impressions; and she answered with what Sigismund considered coldness and indifference, and merely said, that she hoped, now her tyrant and persecutor was no more, she should be allowed to return to Santa Caterina.

Luna looked at her habit of a novice, which she had constantly retained, and could not but think it a singular dress for the widow of his friend; her manner also

of mentioning the death of Della Bardia increased his wonder, and for some moments he forgot his own situation in the interest excited by his new-discovered relative, and he inquired, with every appearance of surprise, if she really preferred her convent to the society and liberty she might enjoy as baroness della Bardia?

"If you are really my brother," she replied, "and can sanction so horrible an act as tearing a novice from her convent, and taking her by force to the altar, by the name of marriage, then indeed Heaven is my only hope, and that yet will save me."

"My sister, you do not know me, or you would be assured I have no hope of comfort left equal to that of contributing to yours. Della Bardia told me you were his wife; and my mother acknowledged to have given her consent; and though I might feel offended at not being consulted on such a subject, still I had never dreamed that a girl of your age and rank could

really prefer the gloom of Santa Caterina to the pleasures of the world."

"What the pleasures of the world are," said the novice, "I know not, and Heaven forbid that I should ever be exposed to its temptations! but what you call the gloom of Santa Caterina is surely more cheering than this frightful place, where the only beings I have seen, have been the hideous wretch who called himself my husband, another whom he called his friend, a priest whom I believe they murdered, an ignorant old woman, and some ferocious-looking soldiers. Think you not the holy mother and pious sisterhood I left, must be regretted in such company?"

"You do not seem to consider yourself married, Francisca?"

"I do not; I am the elect spouse of God, and during the whole mockery of a marriage-ceremony, I constantly protested against it; and if I have no nearer relative than you, to you I entreat to be allowed to fulfil the destiny I have so long considered as mine."

Count Luna listened with the greatest attention and interest to Francisca as she spoke, and when she ceased, he said—  
“ Neither you nor I, my sister, have been fairly dealt by in this business, I fear ; but Accursi is gone to his account—we will not judge him. You had better remain quietly here for a short time. Neither your mother nor myself can at present afford you assistance or protection ; I am in fact forced hither by necessity to seek a refuge from my enemies ; but I trust to be able, through your assistance, to reach the continent of Italy, and to engage our kinsman, the sovereign pontiff, in my cause, when all will once more be as we would have it, and you shall be free either to come forth to the world as the beloved sister of Sigismund di Luna, or to return again to your seclusion.”

With considerable surprise Francisca asked what assistance it could be in her power to afford ?

“ Rest and concealment for the present, and a disguise hereafter to facilitate my

escape to some port, from whence I may embark for Italy."

To this the novice expressed her most ready compliance, and whilst Sigismund continued his repast, the castellan was summoned, and the injunction of secrecy most strictly enforced. It was determined that it should be given out to the few domestics in the castle, that the person who arrived was sent over on business respecting the death of the baron, and had departed again, a few hours after, from the postern, as privately as he had entered. It was settled also that Luna should remain a day or two to recover from his fatigue, during which time the old man was to procure for him the habit of a monk, which he said he could do without difficulty.

The interval of Sigismund's stay at San Bartolomeo was spent in long and interesting conversations with his sister, who listened with deep and painful interest to the details of her family and connexions; and Sigismund having his own tale to tell as he thought proper, she was led to consider

him as a persecuted and injured man, who having been driven by private oppression and public insult to redress his wrongs, and his enemy having fallen beneath his victorious arms, he was now compelled by the tyranny of the government to abandon his home, and to seek for protection with the pontiff, whose sacred name, thus connected with the cause, sanctified, in the eyes of the devout novice, every action in which her brother had been engaged, and she considered it as impossible for any one to resist his entreaties, whose commands she had been taught were at least equal to edicts published by Heaven itself. Her confidence, zeal, and affection, cheered the drooping spirits of Luna; and as the hour of parting drew near, he felt that it would cost him a bitter pang to separate the ties which, even in the short acquaintance of two days, this new-found sister had entwined around his heart. Respecting the character and disposition of her mother, Francisca had been anxiously inquisitive, and Luna, whose filial affection ex-

tenuated many of her faults, and whose vanity blinded him to others, drew a portrait of the countess, in which few beside himself would have been able to discover the slightest resemblance to the original, judging also by his own gratified feelings, and by the thoughts of his mother's desolate and abandoned state. During his absence he earnestly conjured his sister, for a time at least, to give up the idea of returning to Santa Caterina, and as soon as possible to hasten to Sciacca, and endeavour by her presence to cheer and comfort their unhappy parent.

The feelings of Sigismund during his concealment at San Bartolomeo had been softened and subdued to a lower tone than they had known during the whole of his previous existence; his pride had been humbled by misfortune, his revenge had expired after its gratification, and his heart had been expanded to the soft influence of his sister's innocent and gentle affection, which had met with none of those obstructions or irritating jealousies he had endured

from his passion for Costanza di Solanto. He had never before appeared so amiable, and his fraternal kindness had all the effect upon the mind of his sister which could be expected from a youthful heart, to which every thing like tenderness and affection in others towards herself had hitherto been unknown. The castellan had procured the disguise, and Sigismund, stripped of his armour, his hair shorn, and changed in appearance from the warrior to the monk, awaited the fall of night, with anticipated regret at the thoughts of parting from the kind solace of his afflictions.

The cheering predictions of his sister, and the full reliance she placed on the effect of his application at Rome, had restored the confidence which he had at one time nearly lost, and he felt strengthened both in mind and body from the short time of his stay with her. For months previous to this time, his whole soul had been in a fever and tumult of all the darker passions. Jealousy, anger, and revenge, had scarcely been for an instant at rest within him, and he had been sur-



rounded on all sides by those who urged him forward in his evil and unhappy course, and by irritating instead of soothing his feelings, had added fuel to their scorching vehemence, and plunged him irretrievably in misery and guilt. He had now felt the benignant influence of all the gentle virtues, and sighed at quitting the narrow circle they illumined.

On the eve of his departure, the brother and sister sat watching the sinking sun, as he rapidly declined towards the distant ocean.

"I have a hazardous and eventful journey before me," said Sigismund, with a sigh. "Upon its success depends the very existence of the name of Luna and Peralta, or else methinks this habit, which I wear but for a time, would be the object of my choice for ever, and the boundary of my wishes."

"The object of your mission once complete, my brother," replied Francisca, "and the kind friends who have partaken your fortunes restored to peace and liberty,

where can you better hope to meet with happiness on earth than in the shelter of a convent?"

Sigismund thought upon Costanza; if, as he feared, she was the prize of Federico Perollo, there was not the spot on earth in which he could hope for happiness or peace. Yet to abandon his mother, whose very being depended on his fame, to quit this loved and affectionate sister for ever, required a resolution he did not possess.

Francisca saw that he was disturbed by a conflict of distracting feelings, and beginning in a low sweet tone the first notes of the rosario, she succeeded in catching his attention. She continued her strain of simple devotion, and the whole soul of Sigismund was melted by its fascination; he threw himself on his knees beside her, and covering his face with his habit, wept with unresisting vehemence. Francisca was astonished at this conduct, and stopped for an instant; Sigismund implored her to go on, and after some moments he arose more composed and tranquil, and implor-

ing a blessing upon her head, entreated her not to abandon him should he return, but for a time to refrain from concluding her vows, that he might look forward to the consolation of her society, for a short season at least, before her abjurement of the world divided them for ever. To this she consented, and throwing her rosary over his neck, exhorted him to look forward without despondency to the conclusion of his present difficulties. The count then gave her an affectionate parting embrace, and hurried from the room, while the novice prostrated herself in prayer for the protection of the wanderer, and his restoration hereafter in happiness and peace.

The castellan conducted him some short distance from the castle, and took an humble and respectful leave of the disguised chieftain, with repeated promises of inviolable secrecy, which he most faithfully observed.

When count Luna escaped from Bivonia, he had a considerable sum in money

and jewels about his person, which were more than sufficient for his journey under his present disguise, by which he was so changed in appearance, as to give him little cause to fear discovery.

Nevertheless he considered it prudent to avoid both the cities of Messina and Palermo, as in such populous places, the residences of the court and army, his person might probably be well known to many individuals; and he therefore determined to cross the country to Syracuse, Trapani and Marsala being both towns in which he might be recognized, from their vicinity to Sciacca. And to avoid approaching Caltabellotta, he took his way at first northward along the hills to the west of Sambuca, and in the morning arrived at a small village on the bank of the river Caltabellotta, where he was kindly welcomed by the piety and hospitality of the poor inhabitants; and after several hours repose, he forded the stream, and bending his steps to the south-east, proceeded in the direction of Alessandria.

During several succeeding days he continued his route unmolested, and passed through Regalmuto, Mazzarino, and Caltagirone. Leaving Vizzini on the south, he crossed the mountains near Bucchari, held on his way by Casara, and toiling up the western side of Hybla Magiore, at length arrived in sight of the port from whence he hoped to embark for Italy.

Don Sigismund paused to rest himself, and cast his eyes with wonder on the scene beneath him—the widely-extended plain from Augusta to Syracuse, the towering summit of Etna, beneath whose gigantic shadow every neighbouring mountain dwindles to nothing, rising clear and unconnected with every other hill, capped with snow, and sending from its topmost crater a column of smoke, which ascended perpendicularly toward the skies, and, at an immense elevation, inclined somewhat to the south. On the other hand were the craggy cliffs once crowned by the walls of the far-famed city, and beyond them the sunbeams glittered on the sea, and sparkled on the waves of the bay, which resembled

an inland lake. The poor remains of this great city, now dwindled to a few insignificant buildings, which occupy the island of Ortygia, seemed but a speck on the landscape; and the harbour which had held the navies of Greece and Rome, could boast only a few small galleys and insignificant fishing vessels.

Luna had yet a long journey to his resting-place, and after a short pause upon the mountain's brow, he descended to the plain; and having crossed it, and toiled up the steep ascent called the Scala degli Greci, he had still nearly two leagues to reach the present town; and through the whole track which had once been covered by the habitations of man, not a single dwelling could now be seen. Even the very materials of which Syracuse was built have passed away; and of a city once two-and-twenty miles in length, so few vestiges remain, that it appears almost impossible to credit the tales of its former grandeur and extent; but the car-worn track of the wheels which had once rattled

through its narrow crowded streets, shew the direction in which they ran, and the traffic which must one day have filled them.

Luna however passed these scenes absorbed in feelings of private interest and concern, and gave no thought to the desolation which time had spread around him. The walls and fortifications of the present city had not been erected, and a slight gate and rampart admitted the traveller unquestioned and unregarded. A monk on his way to Rome was an object of little curiosity or suspicion; and count Luna remained unmolested in Syracuse till he found an opportunity of embarking for the continent of Italy; and when he bade adieu to the shores of his native island, he considered his difficulties and dangers at an end.

He reached the Imperial city without any extraordinary incident or delay, and was welcomed by his holiness with all the kindness he could wish. Clement had heard a rumour of the transactions in

which his kinsman had been engaged, but he listened with compassion to his detail of the grievances by which he had been driven to so desperate an act, as to place the fortunes of his house, the lives of his friends, and even the existence of his name, in such jeopardy, and promised to exert his influence and authority with Charles at their approaching interview, he being in a few days to set out for Bologna, for the purpose of placing the crown of Italy upon his head. The impatience of Luna was obliged to yield to circumstances, and for six months he suffered all the torments of the delay which arose, before the emperor set out on his progress to the scene of his coronation.

Uncertain rumours reached him during this time from Sicily of the sufferings of his friends; but of his mother and his sister he could hear nothing; and when his holiness did set out upon his expedition, the suppliant had been so harassed by uncertainty and expectation, that his health



was injured, and his spirit sunk into despondency.

Clement sought the opportunity most favourable for his suit; and on the day on which he placed the crown on Charles's head, before the whole assembled court of cardinals and princes of the empire, and the nobles of Spain, Germany, and Italy, implored the Imperial pardon for his relative, count Sigismund di Luna. With the deepest expressions of regret, the monarch lamented that it should be possible for his holiness to ask that which he felt it an imperious duty to deny; and with every assurance of respect and veneration for the petitioner, who might in all things else command him, declared his firm resolution never to forgive the inhuman murder of the gallant Pandolfina, the barbarous treatment of his mangled remains, the rebellious assassination of Starella, and the unheard-of outrages by which Sciacca had been visited through count Luna and his associates.

The pope attempted to change the pur-

pose of the emperor, but in vain. To shew however his inclination to gratify the head of the church, as far as a due regard to the laws of justice, and the rights of the people would admit, Charles offered to remit the sentence of attainder which had been decreed against the heirs of the offenders, and declared his willingness to restore the children to their honours. Clement perceived his prayer would be useless, and most unwillingly desisted, dreading the effect his failure might have upon the unhappy Sigismund.

The Imperial party broke up, and Clement returned to Rome in February, where the ill-fated chief awaited his sentence in agony and dread, hardly more for himself than for his friends, whom he continually heard were suffering under the severest penalties the viceroy could inflict. The pontiff sent for Luna to his presence immediately on his return, and after professing his readiness to exert his power in his own dominions to render his future life safe and honourable, broke by degrees the

fatal intelligence, which fell at length like a thunderbolt upon the subdued and heart-broken victim of passion and revenge. All the offered kindness of the pontiff was forgotten in the tide of despair which rushed upon him, and he withdrew from the interview in a state of mind but little removed from distraction.

Descending from the steps of the palace, he was proceeding along the streets with folded arms, and thoughts absorbed in misery, when the sudden exclamation of a person near him, roused him once more to a sense of external objects; he raised his eyes, and before him stood Ferrante Luchese; both remained for some time in silent surprise, and Luna was about to turn away, indignant at the remembrance of the reproofs he had met with, and the subsequent desertion of his partisan, when Luchese, who had observed the altered appearance of Sigismund with the deepest regret, and had forgotten, in compassion for his fallen fortunes, all but the love and respect he had once borne to his chieftain

and his friend, caught him by the arm, and in a voice tremulous from agitation, entreated to be heard. It was some time since the tones of affection had reached the ear of Sigismund, and not unwillingly he allowed himself to be detained.

“We parted in anger, signor—we meet in banishment and sorrow. Forget, I beseech you, all but our former friendship, and once more accept the services of Luchese.”

“I have no means of rewarding the services of any one,” replied Luna, in a voice suffocated by the violence of contending emotions; “I should have thought the party to whom you had transferred your friendship, might have found some better remuneration for their ally than banishment and disgrace.”

Luchese perceived that anguish and grief had overpowered the mind of Luna, and sought by every means to conciliate and appease him. Sigismund gradually appeared to soften, and at length, with some hesitation, inquired the fate of some

of his adherents, of which he was still ignorant.

Luchese gave him all the intelligence in his power.

Luna hesitated for an instant, and at last inquired for his mother?

"Her excellenza is retired from Sciacca."

"To what part of the island?"

"To a convent in the neighbourhood."

"And Francisca, the widow of Della Bardia, have you heard of her?"

"The lady, I presume," replied Ferrante, "who was found at San Bartolomeo."

"Found at San Bartolomeo!" echoed Luna, "and by whom?"

"By those, signor, who were sent to dismantle the fortresses of our party."

"And did my mother suffer her to remain till she was dragged a prisoner from thence, conducted in triumph before our persecutors? and has she since abandoned her?"

"The countess is not to blame in this,

and the lady Francisca has found an asylum with——” Ferrante paused.

“ With whom ?” asked Luna.

His companion still continued silent.

Sigismund seized him by the arm, and demanded, in a tone of alarm and supplication, with whom his sister had been placed ?

“ With the widowed baroness Pandolfina.”

Luna trembled violently, and seemed struggling with his feelings.—“ I had not supposed,” he said, “ my mother would submit to this degradation. Has her spirit been subdued by our misfortunes ? We are fallen indeed, when the countess Caltabellotta allows her daughter to be an humble dependant on the widow of a conquered enemy ; I could have borne any thing but this—any thing rather than have known my mother thus yielding to misfortunes, and inflicting disgrace upon herself and family !”

“ The countess was not accessory to this,” said Luchese.

“ Why then did she not prevent it ? ”

“ Her *eccellenza* possessed not the power.”

“ And who could restrain the mother and the child from sharing each other’s afflictions ? they at least were innocent from our offences ; nor would the injustice of our judges, I trust, seek to involve them in our punishment.”

“ The countess is not in a state to have received the lady Francisca into her care,” said don Ferrante.

“ The same convent which received her might have afforded shelter to my sister ; and the countess ought to have reflected on the pangs which Sigismund must feel, when he knew of Francisca’s degradation, in being left to the charity and protection of a Perollo. I did not think my mother’s heart could have suffered by my reverses.”

“ The countess is changed indeed,” replied Luchese ; “ grief and misfortune have unhinged her mind, or her maternal feelings would have shone, as they have

ever done, amongst the most prominent features of her character."

In vain Ferrante sought to conceal the dire intelligence of the malady which possessed the unhappy mother of Luna. His inquiries could neither be evaded nor unanswered, and he extorted the whole detail from the unwilling narrator, who endeavoured to soften and conceal the most afflicting circumstances.

To his great astonishment, the count listened some time without any violent manifestation of horror at the account; but stopping suddenly, he seized the hand of Luchese, and averting his face, uttered some inarticulate words. His companion requested permission to attend him to his abode.

"Not at present," said Luna, in a hurried tone. "Commend me to Francisca; tell her, as she valued the wretched Sigismund, to break off all connexion with the race of Pandolfina."

He then endeavoured to leave Luchese; but the latter wished to accompany him



to his residence, and not to quit him in such an hour of affliction. They walked for some distance in silence, Luna having refused to return either to his own abode, or to the pontifical palace, when meeting a procession, about which a considerable crowd was collected, the count suddenly quitted his companion, eluded his pursuit, and escaped through the throng, leaving Ferrante alarmed and distressed at the events of their conversation, and the perturbed state of mind into which Sigismund was evidently thrown, by the communications which he had extorted from him.

Sigismund hurried impatiently forward to escape Luchese. His feelings had reached that frightful acme of suffering, which renders even kindness importunate. He had never been accustomed to weigh any subject, or consider any incident dispassionately. Now he seemed to have lost the power of thinking; he could only feel and suffer. His mother, his sister, his mistress—all those beings to whom the

victim of crime or misfortune naturally turns for sympathy or consolation, seemed to the unhappy Sigismund but as phantoms to torment him.

As he fled through the streets, each object was to his agonized imagination a fresh source of pain. He had in his despair left the only one whose attachment and discrimination might have soothed the phrenzied disappointment of his every hope and affection. A church attracted his sight; he entered without knowing why; perhaps to escape the bustle of the streets. A marriage had just been solemnized, and the party were returning from the altar. Their mirth roused the attention of poor Sigismund, and he looked earnestly towards them; his eye rested on the bride; the misery of the moment made him fancy her like Costanza; the idea deprived him of reason, and he uttered a wild and frightful groan, and rushed from the church.

In the mean time, Luchese had been seeking him with all the anxiety which

must be felt for one whom he had been accustomed to respect and love, and whom he met, like himself, a wanderer and an exile from his native home. It was no time for a heart like his to remember anything but the sorrows of his friend, and his fear and sympathy for him increasing every minute, he continued his search for several hours, till at last, hopeless and weary, he was returning over the Ponte Rotto, when he saw a crowd of people pressing to the battlements to look over, and by their gestures seemingly shocked at some fearful accident.

Luchese inquired of one who seemed informed on the subject, and was told that a gentleman had just thrown himself off the parapet towards the river. He felt a chill of horror at the idea that it might be Sigismund, and every joint trembling with the excess of his alarm, sought the water's edge, where he saw that a boat had put off, and they had picked up the body of the unfortunate suicide.

Before they could reach the shore, Lu-

chese rushed through the water to meet them ; he found his worst fears realized, and clasped in his arms the grief-worn form of Luna ; he thought he breathed, and frantically implored assistance from the bystanders.

After a few minutes, Sigismund unclosed his eyes, and Luchese's tears of joy fell upon his bosom, but they were premature. The unhappy count, in falling, had struck several times against the ruinous fragments under the bridge ; and even before Luchese could speak his hopes, gave one look of grateful recognition, and expired.

Sincere and heartfelt was Luchese's grief, as he followed the remains of the proud, the great, the gallant chieftain of Luna and Peralta to his abode.—“ Great were thy faults, dear Sigismund,” he mentally said, “ but greater might have been thy virtues ; yet they were cast aside, and thy failings only cultivated ;—the weeds nourished, and the flowers left to wither upon the stem. Where are now the beauty

and the lofty demeanour which distinguished thee? where the rank, the power, the riches, of which thou wert so vain? All, all passed away, and sacrificed to revenge! Would I had met thee sooner—would almost that I had never left thee! but just are the ways of Heaven; and I, for my offences, have lived to see thee thus."

## CONCLUSION.

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THE examination of Pietro di Forni was delayed for a few days, in consequence of the more important business in which the ministers of justice were engaged; he was however carefully secured and humanely treated; at length he was brought before the judges, and having obtained a promise of mercy and protection for himself, he unfolded a long train of villainy, of which he had been first the agent, and afterwards the victim.

Seduced by the promises and bribes of the countess Caltabellotta, whose servant he had been, he had administered the poison which cut off the lady Lucretia, the wife of count Luna. He had also been her confidant in the affair of Francisca; and at length became an object of dread to his employer, who resolved to rid her-

self of her fears, by the death of the unhappy tool of her iniquitous practices. To this end she applied to a notorious bravo in the neighbourhood of Sciacca. The man was connected with Della Bardia and count Giorgio, and revealed to the former the application which had been made to him. The consequence was, the seizure of the miserable Pietro, whose death was reported to the countess, and the bribe paid to the supposed assassin; whilst the prisoner was delivered into the hands of Accursi.

In possessing himself of the secrets of the countess, Della Bardia hoped to secure a fund of wealth, and an accession of influence, which might at any time further his interested or ambitious views. Every method of torture was unsparingly used to the unhappy captive, and from him the fullest discovery was extorted of all the private affairs of the countess, who was thus placed completely in his power. How that power was used, has already been detailed. Aware that fear of exposure

could alone secure his life, he had always declared that he had taken such means to ensure the publication of the facts, in case any attempt was made against his own life, that the preservation of her persecutor had become an object of the greatest interest to the countess, in spite of her hatred and alarm: and Pietro di Forni lingered in the dungeons of San Bartolomeo, and was afterwards removed to Bivonia, in order to keep the lady in constant terror of his production to the world, in case she should be prompted to resist the will of her tyrant. The whole was now brought to light by the deliverance of the captive, who was retained as evidence against the countess, and she herself committed to the convent of Santa Lucia, where the course of human justice was suspended by the awful visitation of Heaven.

The troops sent to demolish the castle of San Bartolomeo had received orders to forward, as prisoners to Scinopca, any persons discovered there who might have been amongst the late insurgents, and to search



carefully for the person of count Luna, who was supposed to be concealed in some of the abodes of his friends; but as Pietro knew nothing of Della Bardia's marriage, Francisca was naturally supposed from his confession to be in the convent of Santa Caterina, and in consequence, no directions had been given as to the disposal of her person.

Every possible courtesy was however shewn her by the officer commanding the detachment, and an offer made to conduct her safely whithersoever she chose to go. To return to Santa Caterina would naturally have been her wish, had not her promise been given to don Sigismund to seek her mother in Sciacca, and thither she requested to be sent.

Upon arriving in the city, and learning the arrest of the countess, the distress of Francisca was unbounded. Ignorant of the world, unacquainted with any one, and herself unknown to all, she was for some time unable to decide on what steps to pursue—to abandon her parent in af-

fliction and imprisonment, was however impossible; and she requested to know if she might not be permitted to share in the captivity of the countess. She was necessarily referred to the principal authority in Sciacca, and conducted to the residence of the commander in chief. Her narrative and her appearance equally interested the gallant general, who assured her that every thing she wished should be complied with as far as possible; but that some delay was inevitable; forbearing to shock her with the detail of her mother's malady; and he was considering to whose protection he should commit the friendless novice, when Federico and don Paolo Perollo were announced. With every mark of respect and attention, he requested Francisca would retire to another apartment for a short time, whilst he deliberated on the necessary steps to be taken with respect to her petition; assuring her of receiving every indulgence it was in his power to afford. Having communicated

the circumstances to his visitors, Federico instantly offered the services of his mother.

"Our injuries," he said, "have excited no vindictive feelings towards the innocent members of the Luna family; and the baroness will, I am assured, be most ready to extend her protection and kindness even to the sister of don Sigismund."

"It may be more prudent," observed don Paolo, "to prepare the baroness for the meeting, and to consult her on the subject. She may not be strong enough to stand the shock of encountering any of the family of Luna, whose name alone might serve to keep up too constant a remembrance of the sad ideas with which it must be associated."

Federico proposed instantly to consult his mother on the affair, and the commander having accepted his offer, he returned without loss of time to Santa Martha. Whatever might have been the private feelings of the baroness Pandolfina, grief had not so changed her, but that the claims of humanity overcame

every other consideration ; and Francisca di Luna became her *protégée*, and the companion of Marguerita and Costanza.

What at first was perhaps a painful duty, soon became a subject of pleasure and satisfaction. The manners and appearance of Francisca pleaded with irresistible force, and her new acquaintance became, ere long, warmly and sincerely attached to the stranger thus accidentally thrown on their benevolence, while to the novice the scene of social affection was captivating beyond any thing she had fancied or heard of.

The anxious and devoted maternal love of the baroness, the innocent and unrestrained happiness of the children, the courtly polish and elegance in the manners of Costanza, Marguerita, Federico, and Gaetano, were equally new and fascinating to the recluse ; but accustomed to consider all pleasure as sin, she enjoyed with fear and trembling ; and more than once, when her growing affection and confidence for those around her had tempted her into

some innocent ebullition of youthful mirth, or given evidence that the noble and sensitive feelings of her sex and age were but damped, not extinguished, she started to recollection, as if she had committed a crime, and retired to the convent chapel, endeavouring, by penitence, to efface the stain she had contracted in the world.

But of all her new friends, none seemed to enjoy with so much zest the contemplation of the artless character and gentle timid manners of Francisca as don Paolo Perollo. He was not apt to conceive sudden affections, but the pure and unsophisticated orphan of Luna took him by surprise; his maturer age, and usually graver demeanour, attracted the confidence of Francisca; and oftener to him than to any one else, she ventured to express her ideas and sensations on the new and delightful scene around her.

It was judged by the family, for some months after her return to Santa Caterina, that don Paolo had not enjoyed the distinction of her first and artless friend-

ship, without paying in his heart a costly price for the short pleasure; but he was not one whom any dared trifle with, therefore his feelings on the occasion, whatever they might be, were confined to his own breast, and in time conquered.

Did Francisca's short visit to the world and its vicissitudes add to or diminish the happiness of her cloistered life? It is a question not she herself could answer: it added to her enjoyments, as it expanded her ideas, and gave to her solitary hours much new material for thought, and many very novel and sweet remembrances of her brother and her Perollo friends; but perhaps she sometimes felt a pang of regret, that such pleasures were never more to return, and that her declining years would not be soothed and cheered by the smiles of infancy, or the grateful attentions of filial love; but then she could not have to sorrow over the loss of parents like the younger party, or mourn the loss of wedded happiness, like the baroness; in short, unless it were determined whether the

pains or the pleasures of memory predominated, it could not be discovered if the nun of Santa Caterina lamented or cherished the recollections of the world.

After the adjustment of the affairs in Sciacca, Federico, at the express desire of the viceroy, exerted himself to persuade his mother to remove for a short time to Palermo, which, as she had no ties that bound her to her former home, she consented to do, and was received with fraternal kindness by the duca di Monteleone, whose affectionate care for the children and widow of his murdered friend remained through life unshaken and unchanged.

The lapse of a few months witnessed the celebration of the double marriage of Federico Perollo and Costanza di Solanto, and that of Gaetano and Marguerita. In contemplating the happiness of her own and her adopted child, the baroness enjoyed all the consolation her widowed heart could know on earth.

The future destiny of one more of the

performers in these memorable events may be worthy of note. Don Ferrante Luchese, soon after the death of count Luna, was introduced, through the recommendation of don Paolo Perollo, to don Virgilio Ursino, conde dell Anguillara, through whose interest he obtained at length a military command in Italy, in which he acquitted himself with the same gallantry he had manifested in the unfortunate and criminal affair of Sciacca, and enjoyed, during the remainder of his long and honourable career, the reputation of a brave and noble cavalier.

FINIS.



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